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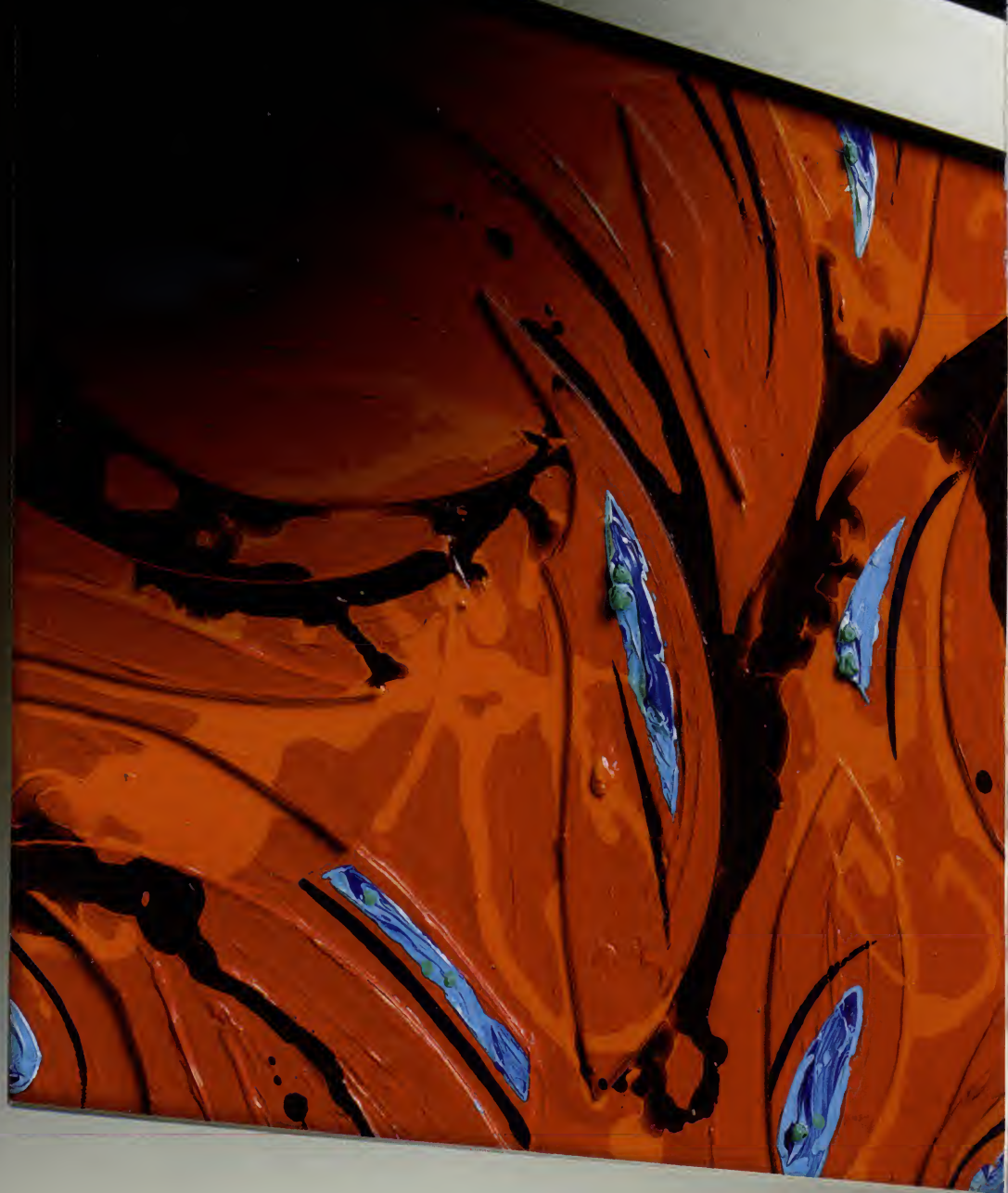
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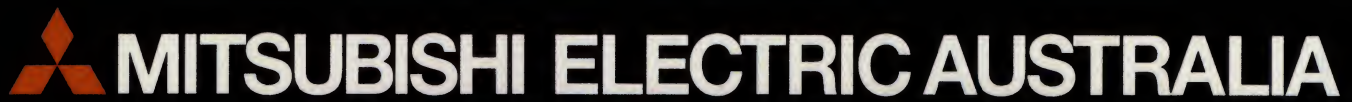
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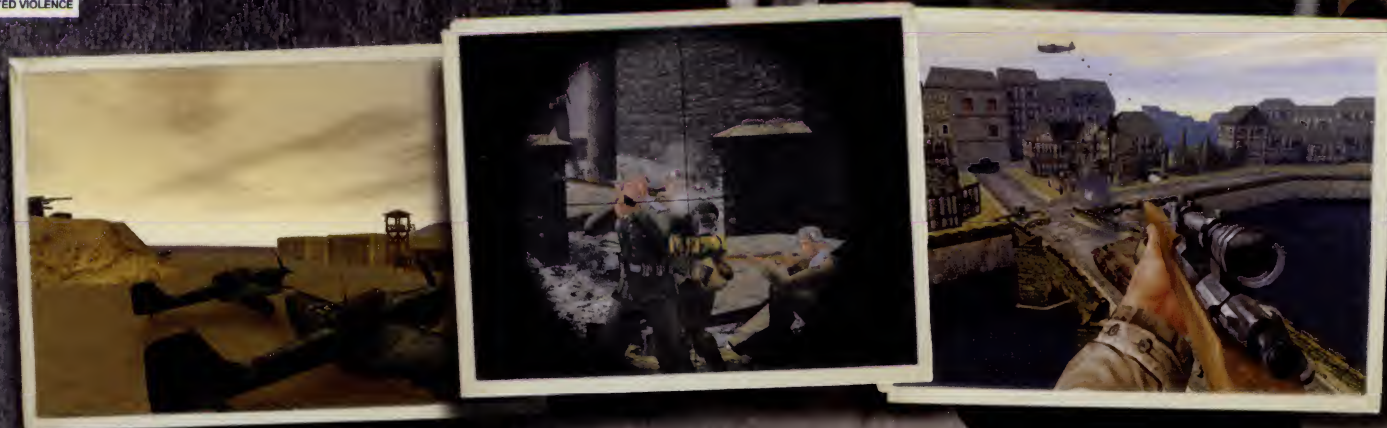
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Well 2001 is now finally done with, even in the bizarre half-time world of

publishing where we write stuff a month and a half before you actually get to read it. So even though this is the second PCPP you've read in 2002, it's only the first one we've WRITTEN this year.

And that's why this month we've included a 6-page retrospective looking back at the games of 2001. Because it's time for you to vote, Constant Readers, time for you to collectively name the greatest game of 2001. This is the list that really counts. Sure, we do our Top 100 every year, but this is the PCPP Reader Game of the Year vote. It's important.

It was so important we set up a special IRC chat to discuss the Year 2001 and its gaming bounty. Duly, more than 80 readers gathered in #pcpp on austnet.org and to be frank, the chat was a complete shambles with so many people they were completely impossible to control. But we'll do it right next time: a general chat, for you the readers to talk to us the staff for an hour or so about whatever you want. It'll be in the same place, on IRC, and it will be held on the evening of 1st March 2002, at 1900h (that's 7pm for you non-military types) so look out for further announcements on the website at www.pcpowerplay.com.au.

To other matters. Games this month were surprisingly hard to come by - being immediately after Christmas (it's January 17th as I write this) most of the distributors are still on holiday.

Nevertheless, we have managed to find you a bunch of minor titles plus the odd nugget of chunky goodness. This year we at PCPP have made a new pledge to review EVERY SINGLE TITLE released for PC in 2002, even if we have to buy some of them ourselves (distributors won't send us the really crappy games, you see. The memory of Heist, Bass Avenger and Mission Humanity is still too fresh in their minds). But now, expect great things.

It is a big month for previews though; Unreal Tournament 2 being a case in point. But don't forget Warlords Battlecry 2 from Sydney's own SSG. This is an old-skool but still flavoursome RPG/Strategy, and just part of a whole month's chunky games reading. So get to it!

Oh and incidentally, for anyone who's asking, yes these are mirrored shades, and yes, we got laws in this county. So watch out.

Anthony Fordham
Editor
anthonyf@next.com.au

08

Unreal Tournament 2

If you don't play Quake3 then you play Unreal Tournament, it's as simple as that. And now the equal-first heavyweight of the online deathmatching scene is getting a facelift. And it's a hell of a facelift, as our first Australian preview of Unreal Tournament 2 shows.

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FREEDOM FORCE

It's 100% Australian made and it's shaping up to be awesome. We take a 6 page look at this upcoming tactical masterpiece



WARLORDS BATTLECRY 2

Another Aussie title gets the exhaustive PCPP preview treatment, as Timothy C Best checks out the latest in this time-honoured series

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STARFIGHTER

The latest Star Wars title packs a punch, and it's fresh from the PS2, so do we get an action-packed ride, or a pile of boring rubbish?



FUTURE VISION

A screen is a screen is a screen right? Wrong. Jaye Gallagher takes a long hard look at the future of displays through her 19" LCD

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CD-RW ROUNDUP

Daniel Wilks dusts off his Britney Spears collection with a mind for a good duping. In the process he takes a look at 6 of the latest CD-RWs



CIV3 IN HINDSIGHT

A few months on and is Civ3 still all things to all men? James Cottey takes a look back at Sid's opus

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and patches!

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UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2



SPOTLIGHT SPECIAL!



Death in the industrial Wasteland, their self-titled album



Unbeknown vastages Indeed - this is action-surreal at its freaky best

One of the most popular online deathmatch games still being played today is set to get a massive overhaul. PC PowerPlay has the first shots of this multiplayer revolution, so look out. Unreal Tournament 2 is coming.



As there are Ford drivers and Holden drivers, so too are there Quake3 players and Unreal Tournament players. The two games stand head-to-head in the Deathmatch popularity stakes, and while Quake3 seems to attract more attention in the professional arena, UT still remains a potent force online.

Here in the PCPP offices we have always preferred Quake3. The reasons are subtle but fundamental; Quake3 has a faster engine than UT (so we think), a leaner gameplay style (no alternate fire modes for us thanks) and most importantly, the arenas and player models out-of-the-box are far more imaginative and allow for more individual expression. UT, it seemed to us, only had a bunch of space marines in football caps.

But halfway through the writing of this issue of PowerPlay, a press CD arrived unannounced from our good friends at GameNation. Bless them, they wrote "Unreal 2 - Latest Build" on the cover, so we thought, cool. But imagine our surprise when we



No wait, THIS is action-surreal at its freaky best



Digital Extremes is doing Epic proud - could Quake3's days be numbered?

WEAPONS



All your Unreal Tournament favourites are set to return for UT2, complete with spectacular alternative fire modes, as well as a few newbies. Digital Extremes lists the firepower on offer as including such tasty bang-bang toys as the Flak Cannon, Assault Rifle, Shock Rifle, Link Gun and Ion Cannon. As you can see from these renders, the detail on the weapons is simply astounding. The orange thing is actually a sniper rifle, if you can believe it. And naturally, weapon effects and sounds are suitably phat and phlshy.

MODELS



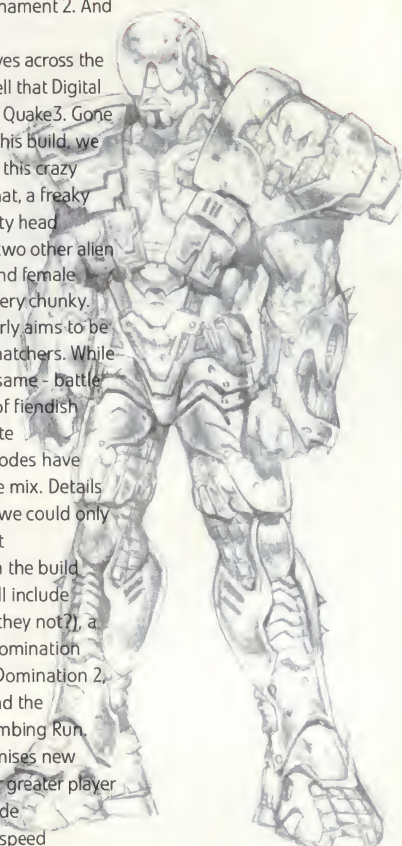
The character models are what have impressed us about UT2 the most. While the original lacked something on the character modelling side, Digital Extremes has really let its team's imagination run wild. Mr Crow, the dude in the black hat, is already a firm favourite, and the two aliens pictured at top are endearing as well. What is most incredible is the detailing on the character models; the closer you get, the more detailed they become, right down to facial expressions. In combat, they look by turns ghastly and disturbing, and that's a very good thing indeed.

loaded up the disc and found this; the almost completely unexpected announcement of Unreal Tournament 2. And doesn't it just look SWEET?

From simply casting our eyes across the screenshots, we can already tell that Digital Extremes has learnt a lot from Quake3. Gone are the marines with caps. In this build, we were able to get our hands on this crazy clown character with the top hat, a freaky nightmarish thing with a pointy head reminiscent of Geiger's Alien, two other alien creature models and a male and female space marine who both look very chunky.

Unreal Tournament 2 clearly aims to be all things to all online deathmatchers. While the central core remains the same - battle your friends and a selection of fiendish bots in more than 30 disparate environments - new game modes have been added to freshen up the mix. Details remain sketchy at this stage (we could only play straight deathmatch) but documentation supplied with the build suggests Digital Extremes will include Capture the Flag (how could they not?), a new version of the popular Domination mode called, oddly enough, Domination 2, something called Survivor, and the evocative and mysterious Bombing Run.

Digital Extremes also promises new gameplay moves, allowing for greater player dexterity in battle. These include translocators, a dodge move, speed enhancers, double-jump and berserker.



Unreal2 technology, combined with Math Engine physics also allows for some of the most fluid character animations seen in a 3D game

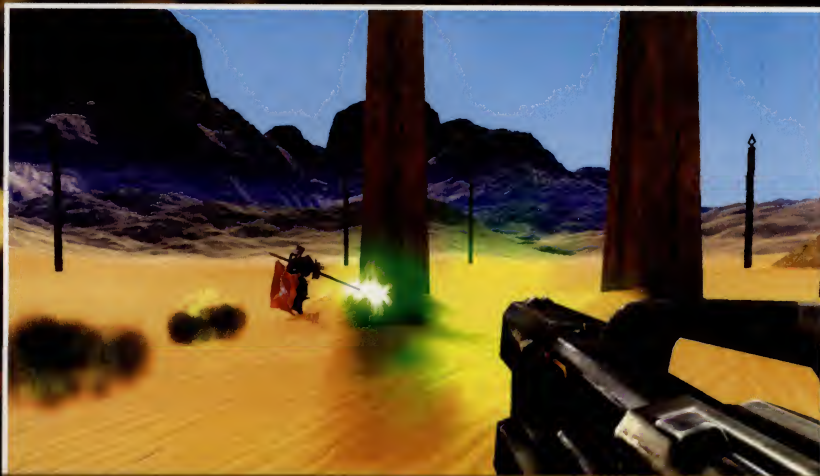
Should add some spice.

UT2 also looks set to be a palimpsest of Tribes2 (not totally sure you can get away with 'palimpsest' in this context, but hey, increase your word power right? - Ed) with the inclusion of vehicles in some of the larger levels. These look to include such things as hover bikes and four-wheel-drive buggies, reminiscent of Halo. Tasty.

We've also been promised a much more team-focused experience, should we tire of straight deathmatch. Most excitingly, Digital Extremes plans to allow offline players to construct teams of bots to play with and against. That's right, assemble a 133+ botz0r team and pummel the CPU into the ground.

And all this in some of the most detailed environments we've yet seen activate the phosphors of our 22" monitors here in the PCPP offices. Unreal Tournament 2 truly shows off the potential of the Unreal2 technology, and combined with Math Engine physics also allows for some of the most fluid character animations seen in a 3D game. Truly, they need to be seen to be believed.

And to think that all those years ago Unreal once looked to be vapourware like Prey! What was once an engine without a game has blossomed into a multiplayer institution. And far from fading into the West, Unreal Tournament 2 looks set to take the next step, and bring online gaming into the 21st Century. Expect a Q3 release. Now game on. ■



Croteam better look out; UT2 is muscling in on Serious Sam's territory...



I don't know what it is, but I do know that it wants to kill me



I'm taking her home to meet Grandma!



How the hell can you hold that thing out and not fall over?

AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

Controversy makes for great publicity. You want it, you want it bad... but you can't have it. At least for now, Grand Theft Auto 3 is a no show for PC which has only served to fuel the intense interest. Bethesda's Morrowind has snuck into the charts beating out Renegade for the number ten, even though there is no publisher for this game in Australia right now. Newbies litter the back of the pack with Relic's Impossible Creatures (formerly known as Sigma: The adventures of some guy in a hat) jumping to number 8. Look out, here comes Freedom Force...

- 1 Grand Theft Auto 3
- 2 Freedom Force
- 3 Neverwinter Nights
- 4 Warcraft III
- 5 Star Wars Galaxies
- 6 JK 2: Jedi Outcast
- 7 Dungeon Siege
- 8 Impossible Creatures
- 9 IGI 2: Covert Strike
- 10 Morrowind



Last month's winner was B. Travis. A copy of Medal of Honor will be with you shortly. Send your Top Five most wanted games to:

wanted@pcpowerplay.com.au

GTA III coming to PC

OFLC classifies Take Two's crime action game

The Classification Review Board at the Office of Film and Literature Classification has reviewed its original decision of Refused Classification for Grand Theft Auto III for PS2. The game now has an MA 15+ rating, so the sale of GTA 3 is now legal and retailers will receive new, revised PS2 versions which should be on-sale late February. Australia was the only country to have outlawed the game's sale and it has continued to be sold elsewhere around the world. These events had cast doubts over a PC version of Grand Theft Auto for Australian gamers.

Grand Theft Auto 3 follows the exploits of an escaped convict as he attempts to make his way in an average American city. This involves stealing cars, attacking assailants and fleeing the police, criminals and the army. Of greatest concern though is that the game allows players to attack innocent bystanders and steal their money, as well as the easter egg that has entered games folklore involving a prostitute, a secret location and money changing hands.

The highly impressive action game has drawn widespread acclaim for its skilful execution as well as its edgy violence. Copies of the original game that have been sold already in Australia have become prized possessions.

It's unclear what has actually been altered in the game but the awarding of a classification certificate means that a PC version is surely on the way, though no release date has been set. The high cost of revising the game has not deterred Take Two Interactive from carrying out the work, considering the GTA III is perhaps the most talked about title of the moment.



Shield your eyes children - he may change form



I got the shotgun

Majestic cancelled

EA's grand concept to close mid-year

Majestic, the revolutionary conspiracy theory game from EA has been so poorly received by gamers that it will shut down completely by the middle of 2002. The game takes place through the use of e-mails, telephone calls and instant messaging to create a more realistic game arena for players. By involving them in possible conspiracies, the game sought to blur the lines between gameplay and the real world. It has not and now will not be released in Australia.

Only 71,000 fans subscribed for the first free episode. Subscribers who went on to pay for the subsequent episodes of the game numbered under

15,000. The failure of Majestic will ultimately cost EA in excess of \$5 million.

The game was briefly embroiled in the media backlash storm that surrounded the plane collisions with the World Trade Centre. Majestic seems to have been struck by the signs of the times: the general malaise of consumers that has seen retail figures around the globe drop and the fear for US national security. Whatever the reason, EA is adamant the Majestic engine is the future of games. For now, the future will have to wait.



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71

Interplay dead? That's the rumour... Word is that Vivendi is looking to purchase the profitable sections of Interplay which is basically Black Isle and nothing else, save perhaps Shiny. By all accounts Interplay has failed to pay their own employees. The payroll is apparently being covered by Vivendi so they have some pretty big dubs on that carcass.

The two big titles that were going to save Interplay were Neverwinter Nights and Dark Alliance, which is not for PC. Following the legal proceedings and split between Bioware and Interplay over Neverwinter Nights, Interplay is left with a console title that didn't meet sales expectations and which has become an all-purpose scapegoat for the overpaid stiff shirts in the boardroom. Heads will roll, people will leave, we swear it.

OziSoft Australia has not suddenly disappeared off the map. But the company has received a name change to GameNation, so never fear Chris and Kym are still on the job and all those eagerly awaited games, like Masters of Orion 3, are still in safe hands.

You have to wonder about the games industry sometimes. Certain recent high profile big movie tie-in games have sold astonishingly well - and why not. But so quiet was the launch that many of us game journos knew nothing about them amidst all the pins dropping. I guess when a game sells itself, you don't need publicity (or scathing reviews).

Lorgaine First Glimpse

The strangest game we've ever heard of...

Yes, by all laws of nature Lorgaine shouldn't even be possible. A 3D turn-based combat game that draws heavily on chess, with a good serve of fantasy card stylings and a unique interpretation of Celtic mythology. Oh and it's online. Kapooki Games are making their first game but reinventing the wheel too.

Players lead a band of warriors around the mythical land of Erin, the ancient mythological version of the developers home Ireland. The two races available in the game are the humans of Tuatha de Dannen and the aquatic Fomor invaders. Battles take place in one of the 200 ritualistic arenas that appear around Erin, where players can challenge each other.

Each player maintains a warband of 12 uniquely skilled characters, from spearmen and crossbowmen, to war machines and heroes. Much like chess, these pieces each have their own attack strengths and movement capabilities.

Add to this mix another level of complexity in the random drawing of cumai or power cards for each battle. These can be used to enhance attacks, shrug damage or bring forth great advantage for your characters.

Each battle in Lorgaine affects the power struggle between the two races in the war for Erin. Overlaying the Combat System is the Management System where warbands can be moved around the map, be healed and improve skills among other options.

More is yet to be revealed about the game and if this isn't one giant red herring, it may just be a late stand out of 2002. More news as it comes to hand.



Billie Jean is not my lover...



Lorgaine is set in giant concentric circles

Beach Life

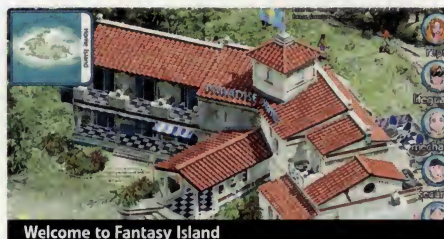
Lusty sojourns in the fresh morning sand...

Ever wanted to manage a bawdy love-nest beach resort? Or perhaps a high-class couples weekend getaway is more to the palate. Developer Deep Red Games, whose most recent title is Monopoly Tycoon, is creating just such a game with wide-brimmed management hat on its crown, in Beach Life. The fun, the sun and all the money you can suck out of a fat American with a camera on his paunch.

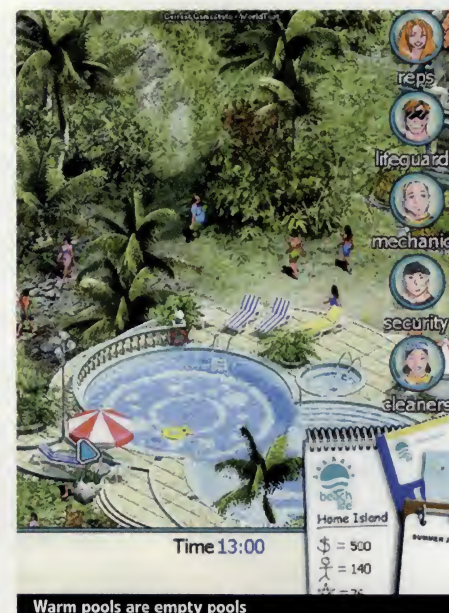
Crossing Temptation Island and The Sims, Beach Life will have you designing a love haven for randy guests. But what kind of guests? The environs of the resort will dictate the clientele it attracts. Want some bronzed beach babes to visit? Build water sports, bars and night-life through which their mating dances can take place. If a more classy establishment is preferred, build

more conservative attractions like champagne cruises. All parts of the running of the Beach Life resort can be customised: attractions, prices, staff and maintenance.

Published by Eidos, Beach Life should arrive just in time for winter 2002. Just the thing to cure the winter blues.



Welcome to Fantasy Island



Warm pools are empty pools

US overturns games law

City ordered to pay legal costs of game companies

The US city of Indianapolis has spent in excess of US\$700 000 in a failed attempt to defend a law that banned minors from playing violent video games in public arcades. Taxpayers will foot the bill of \$400 000 for legal costs and now the city has agreed to meet the video games industry's costs of over \$300 000, after the law was ruled unconstitutional by a US District Judge.

The now defunct law would require children to have parental consent before playing video games. The city of Indianapolis based their argument for such a law on supposed research linking violent and anti-social behaviour to the playing of video games.

However, the city won minor victories in the banning of sexual-content provisions which was unchallenged by the video games industry and the city also has the right to exclude violent video games from public property.

This lawsuit is another chapter in the ongoing legal action against software developers and games distributors, previous examples resulting from the ever more frequent occurrences of schoolyard shootings. This particular law dealt exclusively with the public arena of video game arcades and so didn't involve any individual software companies.

The industry hopes that this result will deter future legal proceedings of this kind, which are likely to receive strong community support from parent's groups and were certainly popular amongst the citizens of Indianapolis. Several other US cities are pursuing similar legal action in what is increasingly becoming a concerted movement by some sections of the community to curb the access of children to video games that are seen as too violent.



COMING SOON

February

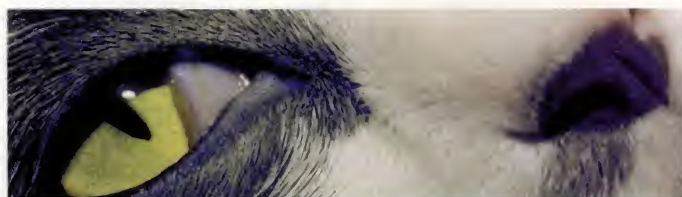
- 4x4 Racing (Take 2 Interactive)
- Battlefield 1942 (Electronic Arts)
- C&C Renegade (Electronic Arts)
- Deus Ex Game of the Year Edition (GameNation)
- Global Operations (Electronic Arts)
- Grand Theft Auto 3 (Take 2 Interactive)
- Harpoon 4 (Ubi Soft)
- Incoming Forces (Activision)
- Mafia (Take 2 Interactive)
- Moto Racer 3 (GameNation)
- Necrocode: The Dead Must Die (Electronic Arts)
- Sovereign (Ubi Soft)
- Spec Ops 2 (Take 2 Interactive)
- Tiger Woods Tour 2002 (Electronic Arts)
- Warrior Kings (Red Ant)

March

- Army Men: RTS (Take 2 Interactive)
- Casino (Take 2 Interactive)
- Conseal (Red Ant)
- Freedom Force (Electronic Arts)
- Heroes of Might & Magic IV (Take 2 Interactive)
- Legends of Might & Magic IX: The Writ of Force
- M4 Armoured Crash (GameNation)
- Reality Deathmatch (Red Ant)

April

- Age of Wonders 2 (Take 2 Interactive)
- Airlines 2 (Take 2 Interactive)
- Cold Zero: The Last Stand (Red Ant)
- Far West (Red Ant)
- GTA 3 (Take 2 Interactive)
- Hotel Tycoon 2 (Red Ant)
- Iron Storm (Take 2 Interactive)
- Masters of Orion 3 (GameNation)
- Natural Resistance (Red Ant)



dr claw

drclaw@pcpowerplay.com.au

hello my champions of the 133+ and here i am in the intensive care ward of the lithgow general hospital which is where i ended up after my cross country adventure with those escaped lunatics mandy and sandy. i am on the internet terminal they have which is government issue so it is one of the new imacs and i feel like i am blaspheming by touching an imac but it does let me visit www.pcpowerplay.com.au which is where our website is plus i can report in to the pcpp offices and say i am still writing for pcpp and not lost and torn to pieces by a pack of mad dogs. anyway i am in the hospital and my legs are totally

encased in plaster not because they are broken or anything but because i used to get up and wander around the hospital with a lollypop and when i dropped my lollypop into the sucking chest wound of some guy in the ER then the doctors said it was the last straw and they encased my legs in plaster for my own good or so they said. anyhow it is cool in the hospital because i have a button i can use to summon the nurse although she doesn't come as much as she used to back when she thought i actually wanted something when i pressed the button instead of just wanting to see how many times she could open and

slam the door before it fell off. it turned out to be 246 times by the way. i have had some trouble with hospital food because i just can't seem to keep it down and for some reason i have always projectile vomited it is one of those things so now there is a stain on the far wall and a stain on the head nurse when she came to check up on me at the wrong moment. but i am going well and getting better and once the implanted steel ring in the back of my head has stabilised and they can chain me to my bed head then they say they will take the plaster off my legs. 133+! 18r.

BYTESIZE



ALICE CONFUSION

Excitement over an actress cast in the lead role for Wes Craven's version of American McGee's Alice is a lot of hot air as Mr McGee himself debunks the rumour. The website involved can be described as less than reliable so we won't give any free ad space to the young nobody it reports as the bladed Alice. The film looks to be released late next year.

YOGI! BACK TO WORK!

The recent "Best in Show" contest for the management sim Zoo Tycoon, saw the winner take home \$20,000 and receive the crown of the newest Microsoft employee. The twist is that the winner is an 800-pound polar bear from Baltimore Zoo, who can now be downloaded into Zoo Tycoon and cared for. Fans of Zoo Tycoon voted Magnet, a 13-year old resident of the zoo, the winner from a shortlist of other animals across the US. He received an honorary Microsoft Employee's Badge while \$20,000 was donated to the Baltimore Zoo for habitat restoration. Humane promotions from the much feared Bill Gates, what next?

REZNOR RETURNS

Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails fame is in talks with id Software to produce the soundtrack for Doom III. Those with beards should return that Reznor was responsible for the groundbreaking Quake soundtrack that set the benchmark for soundtracks that have followed (just as Quake the game did).

Intel's new processors

Pentium 4 'Northwood' Arrives!

The long awaited and highly anticipated Pentium 4 'Northwood' processors have been spotted in Japan as well as a handful of online e-merchants ahead of its official launch. Appearing in varieties of 2.0GHz (also known as 2.0A GHz to differentiate from the old P4 range) and 2.2GHz, these new chips will be the foundations of Intel's assault on the processor market this year.

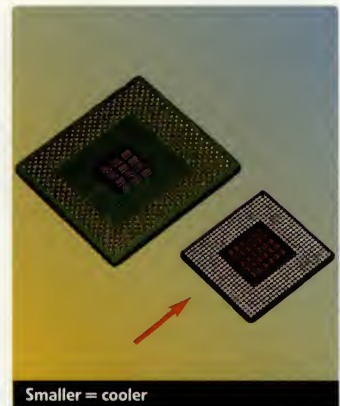
With the new chip comes the final transition from the Socket 423 to the micro Socket 478 factor form. Northwood processors only come in the 478-pins flavour and will only work on Pentium 4 motherboards with the smaller sockets.

There are a few features that distinguish the Northwood from the Willamette. Firstly and more significantly is the die shrink from 0.18 to a minute 0.13-micron. The architecture allows the processor to reduce its voltage from 1.75V to 1.50V and thus lowering the chip's operational temperature. The smaller core also makes for cheaper production with analysts believing manufacturing costs could be reduced by as much as 50%.

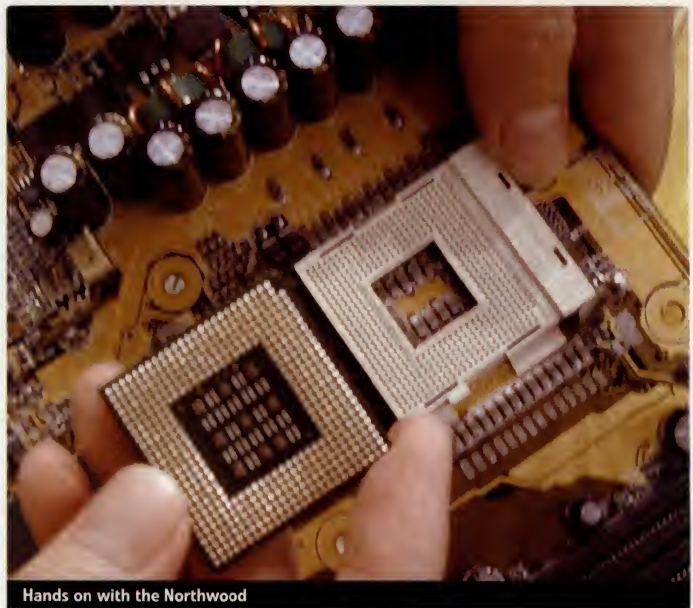
Other important changes include the doubling of L2 cache from 256KB to a whopping 512KB and the move to replace

the aluminium interconnects with copper. The increase in cache will equate to a slight performance boost while the copper interconnects should aid the P4 when scaling to higher speeds.

Northwood is slimmer, cooler, faster and along with the recently announcement of Intel's 845D DDR chipset, the Pentium 4 is beginning to take shape as a compelling games platform. It's a new year and the CPU war is set to continue. Intel is definitely ready.



Smaller = cooler



Hands on with the Northwood

Geforce4 is coming

Codename: nVidia NV25

It has been a few months since nVidia released the Titanium range of Geforce2 and Geforce3 graphics adapters. Nvidia's almost trademark 6-month product cycles can mean only one thing; it's about time for nVidia to announce something new, and this time it's going to be more than just a few tweaks of clock speeds.

The graphics chip codenamed 'NV25' is set to replace the current batch of GF3 cards as nVidia's highend gaming solution. Although specifications have yet to be set in

concrete, industry sources say the new card will sport 6 pixel shaders rather than 4, a core speed of 300MHz, memory frequency of 660MHz, reworked anti-aliasing features and support for up to 128MB of onboard memory. The inclusion of a second vertex shader will bring it on par with the XBOX's XGPU.

Naming of the card is a bit sketching but bets are that it'll be dubbed 'Geforce4'. Whatever its name, it'll be one hell of a powerful graphics card.



Robots and Girls



My, what big eyes you have

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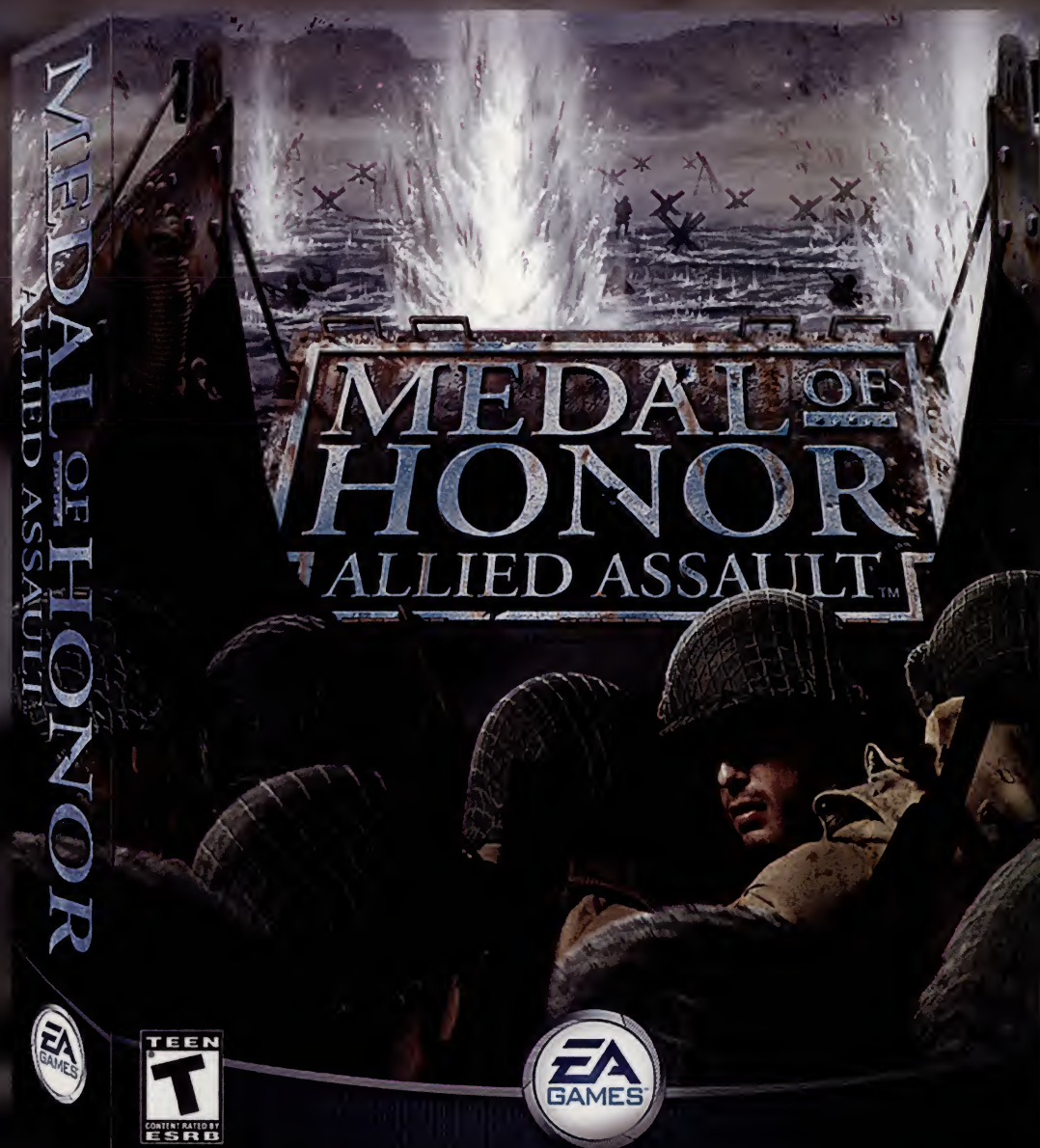
IS THIS JUST A

The seeds of World War II are sown at the end of World War I; the treaties signed at the end of the Great War satisfy neither the victors nor the vanquished. Social, political, and economic changes nurture these seeds over the next 21 years, until they germinate in Poland. Barely 20 years after the "war to end all wars," German dictator, Adolph Hitler plunges the world into a war that will take the lives of 50 million people.

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Harvey Norman

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Creature Isle (PC).
(M15+)



\$69⁹⁵ Master Of
Orion 3 (PC). (G8+)



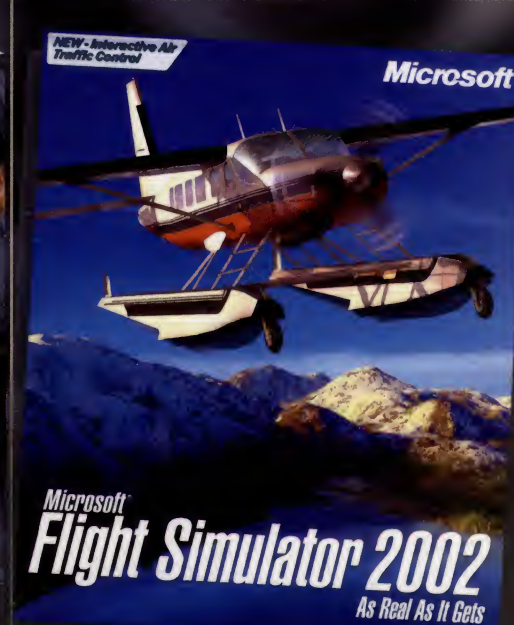
\$69⁹⁵ Sports V8
Challenge
(PC-CD). (G)



\$89⁹⁵ C&C Renegade
(PC). (MA15+).



\$89⁹⁵ Star Wars
Starfighter (PC).
(G8+)



\$109⁹⁵ MS Flight
Simulator 2002
(PC). (G)

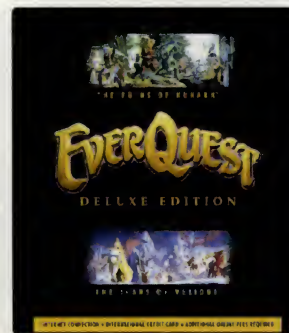
THE GAMING SPECIALISTS

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Luclin of the Irish

It's another massive gaming giveaway of goodness!



In order to celebrate the imminent release of Everquest: Shadows of Luclin (it's a new add on pack dontcherknow) Ubi Soft in their infinite wisdom has decided to give you, our beloved readers, a massive chunk of gaming goodness for your very own.

Enter the competition, and you'll have a chance at getting your mitts on this fabulous limited edition lithograph of Everquest niceness, a bushel of highly detailed collector's edition Everquest figurines, a copy of Everquest Deluxe

which includes both the original and Scars of Velious, and of course a copy of Shadows of Luclin. Explore unbeknown vastages! Chat with thousands of like minded RPG fruits online! Lose your friends, family, livelihood and personal hygiene! It's totally awesome.

But what do I do?

To be in the running for this phattest of phat prize packs, simply write us a short 100 word anecdote about the most amazing piece of luck you've ever experienced, seen, or even

just heard about from a friend of a friend. The story that amazes us the most and makes us fairly slap our foreheads with a cry of "Now that's dumb luck!" will win the fabulous poster (limited edition did we mention? Worth \$1000 on Ebay did we mention?), figurines and every Everquest game ever released.

But if you think your story isn't that lucky, fear not. Four lucky runners up will also receive every Everquest game ever released. That's Everquest, Scars of Velious and Shadows of Luclin. Unlimited online RPG potential!

HOW TO ENTER

Send your entries to:

**You Dumb Lucker
C/- PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016**

And good luck!

HERCULEAN EFFORT

Well folks our Thrustmaster's the Twelve Tasks of Hercules competition was both massively successful and massively controversial. In future, we probably won't be running a "first in wins" competition since we got justly slammed by all you readers in regional Australia who didn't get their mags until three days after Jonathan Kummerfeld of Rose Bay North, Sydney got his entry in. Still you have to admire the lengths to which he went; we received his entry at 8:31am on the very first possible day anyone could get the mag. Not bad, not bad at all, almost worth \$1500 worth of tasty Hercules and Thrustmaster gear. Still, everyone who missed out, we apologise, and we'll run a similar competition again just as soon as we can convince Katy and Jean-Francois at Thrustmaster and Hercules to part with a chunky pile of stuff. Still, it was a fun comp while it lasted right? Right?

inform**The Official Australian Games Chart**

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

W/E 6 January 2002

**TOP
20****Best Selling Full Price
PC Games (over \$30)**

1	◆	Harry Potter	Adventure
2	◆	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
3	▲	Empire Earth	Strategy
4	▼	The Sims	Strategy
5	◆	Return To Cstle Wolfenstein	Action
6	◆	The Sims Collectors Edition	Strategy
7	◆	Civilization 3	Strategy
8	▲	The Sims House Party	Strategy
9	▲	Diablo II: Lrd Of Destrction	RPG
10	▼	Ghost Recon	Strategy
11	▲	The Sims Livin' Large	Strategy
12	▲	Star Trek Armada 2	Adventure
13	▼	C & C Yuris Revenge Exp	Strategy
14	▼	Star Wars Galactic Bttlegrnd	Strategy
15	▼	Who Wants To Be A Millnire?	Family
16	▲	Sim City 3000 Unlimited	Strategy
17	▲	Diablo II	RPG
18	★	The Sims & Mouse Pack	Strategy
19	▼	Red Faction	Action
20	★	Silent Hunter 2	Simulator

★ New Entry ◆ Non Mover ▲ Up from last week ▼ Down from last week

Charts can be viewed at
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DVDA

Beyond the silver screen with James Cottee

AMERICAN W/WOLF IN LONDON

Universal, MA 15+

Viewing American Werewolf again after all these years highlights its significance in the history of horror films, as it heralded the new wave of realistic latex creatures that assailed us for the remainder of the century. This 20th anniversary edition DVD comes with many extras: behind-the-scenes footage, interviews, a commentary track, and more. For instance, did you know that the reason so little footage of the werewolf made it on screen was because the suit was obviously fake if you saw it for more than a second? These sparing glimpses of the beast actually made the film scary, a fact lost on today's directors.



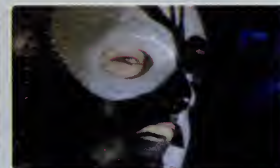
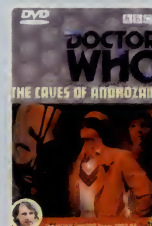
3/5

DOCTOR WHO: THE CAVES OF ANDROZANI

Roadshow, PG

This adventure begins like many a Doctor Who romp, with the absent-minded Time Lord dropping in on a quarry planet for no real reason. As usual, it takes him about five minutes to get entangled in a civil war. What distinguishes The Caves of Androzani is neither the acting prowess of Peter Davison (the 5th Doctor) or Nicola Bryant (Peri), but the incredible cast of supporting characters, including Christopher Gable as the warped scientist Sharaz Jek. The DVD is packed solid with extra material, including out-takes, extended footage, a photo gallery, interviews, running commentary from the director and stars, on-screen trivia subtitles, and more!

5/5



CARDCAPTORS VOL 3

Madman, PG

Sakura, unlikely schoolgirl hero and destined captor of the Clow Cards, continues her frilly adventures in this third disc. Each episode thus far has followed a standard pattern: Sakura's rampant daydreaming about significantly older men is sidelined when mysterious goings-on suggest the presence of a rampaging elemental beast. Once decked out in a bizarre costume, she uses her magic wand and some recycled animation to tame the card and save the day. Disc 3 introduces a foil to the easy-going Sakura: Li Showron, who arrogantly assumes his fruity outfit makes HIM the rightful cardcaptor.

Crazy hi-jinks ensue!



3/5

COLD FEET SERIES ONE

Universal, M 15+

Calling this a British version of Friends would be like calling D-Gen an Australian version of Saturday Night Live. It may be technically correct, but ignores that the former is vastly superior to the latter. A handful of professional, 30-ish Brits find no end to the bleakness of their existence, whether they go from one meaningless relationship to the next, or are trapped in a loveless state of co-dependency. A better analogy would be Coupling without the barrage of toilet humour, or perhaps Ultraviolet without the vampires. Or My Hero without the likeable characters. Or Metal Mickey without the robotics.



3/5

THE FAST & THE FURIOUS

Columbia Tristar, M 15+

An involuntary viewing of the trailer for this contemporary hot-rod ballad may have turned away many potential viewers, as the movie isn't really about a stupid love triangle with a cop and some crooks. It's all about cars, cars, cars, and the freakish 2am street racers who put case-moddors to shame. Sight and sound are the film's strong points, and this disc rewards a big setup with big stimulus. The acting is surprisingly decent, too, but there's not much else to say in its defence. Future generations may delight in its retro appeal, but the contemporary, nerdy DVD shopper would sate any

curiosity with a rental. If that.



2/5

THE IN CROWD

Roadshow, MA 15+

Behold, America's exclusive country club culture, where the rich play golf, tennis, with themselves and with each other. Mindless, spineless animals of money and privilege, contemptuous of the help, each other, and themselves. Now suppose, just suppose, that a young woman on work release from a mental hospital scored a job at such an establishment. Suppose she found her efforts to ingratiate herself with the hip young things around her rewarded with knowledge of a twisted conspiracy, culminating with screaming chase scenes through pitch-black rooms and assault with garden

implements. Now, quick question: who cares?



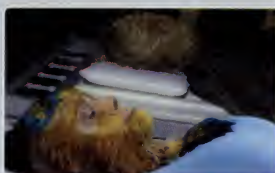
1/5

DOCTOR WHO: VENGEANCE ON VAROS

Roadshow, PG

Colin Baker stars as the freshly regenerated 6th Doctor, who along with his vacuous assistant Peri find the TARDIS has run out of steam. Not to worry, all they need is a quick stop-over on planet Varos, the universe's only source of Zeiton-7, the Time Lords' time fuel of choice. The planet quickly proves to be a delightful holiday destination, being a decadent prison world where residents watch torture, executions and involuntary medical experiments live on TV. The BBC team assembling these DVDs are doing a cracking job, filling them with snappy commentaries, timely trivia, trailers, deleted scenes, galleries, isolated musical scores, and more besides. Ultra!

5/5



VALENTINE

Roadshow, MA 15+

From the director of Urban Legend comes a slasher movie starring some of the prettiest, most talentless young things in Hollywood. Denise Richards (from Starship Troopers), David Boreanaz (Angel), and a pack of largely interchangeable bimbos are falling one by one to a mysterious Valentine's Day themed killer. Tortured by their mockery while still a child, he's had years to plan gruesome revenge, and his glee is barely contained by a cracked Cupid mask. While it's great to see all these twits die, there is nowhere near enough tension to keep the viewer interested for the long haul. Hence, it's not worth watching.



1/5

LAIN VOL 3

Madman, M 15+

Like the rest of us, Lain finds her time divided between the mundane limitations of physical existence and the limitless possibilities of the wired world. But Lain is different to the rest of humanity, and is beginning to suspect that her "real" world life is just a projection from the wired reality that sired her. It would go a long way to explaining the frequent hallucinations, why her friends and family are acting like zombies, and why some even worship her as the master of cyberspace. Everyone's had days when they wish they could reboot the universe, but Lain may actually be in a position to do it.

Thought provoking anime at its best.



4/5

NADESICO VOL 6

Madman, PG

In this final disc of Martian Successor Nadesico, the crew of the most advanced battleship in the solar system enter what look like the final days in the war with the Jovians. With all the minor sub-plots tied up, and most of the character conflicts resolved, it only remains to have one last epic battle over the Martian surface for the ancient artifacts that can decide the fate of humanity. The zany slapstick humour continues apace, now with a slight tint of pathos. This DVD concludes one of the finest anime series ever released in Australia. Nadesico is a boon to the local anime scene, and all fans are advised to bask in its goodness.



4/5

SHADOW SKILL

Madman, MA 15+

More juvenile anime antics that bridge the worlds of fantasy and martial arts. Shadow Skill is little more than mindless violence, brazen titillation, and philosophical mumbo-jumbo, but these factors needn't work against it. Ninja Scroll could be described the same way, and that film was a triumph. The problem with Shadow Skill is that there just isn't enough to it. Certainly, the protagonists will crease their foreheads, scream some power-word, and spontaneously grow muscles that rip their clothes asunder, but each violent act is preceded by about ten minutes of intense staring. In short, they took one

animation shortcut too many.

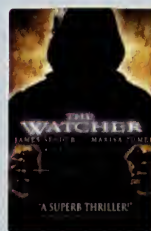


2/5

THE WATCHER

Universal, MA 15+

Keanu Reeves in a tense, realistic psychological thriller. Doesn't sound right, does it? He plays a stalker/serial killer, whose hobbies include methodically strangling lonely young women with piano wire, and then bragging about it to the cops. Joel Campbell, the cop who knows him best, begins a cat-and-mouse game to bring Reeves to justice before he kills again. But using the supernatural powers of escape that all movie masterminds employ, he manages to stave off the authorities long enough to set up a booby trap riddled secret lair. The big question is whether the cop saves the girl before you fall asleep. Answer: no.



1/5



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Manuals and pirates

Ok. I'll admit it. I have occasionally ventured into the dark and evil world of warez in order to get the latest games. Why? Simple, I don't have enough money to pay for all these great releases. I know it's wrong and strips developers of their money/Intellectual Property but I just don't have the dough to pay for them. There is one thing that can make me go out and buy a game though, and that thing is a manual. A nice, big fat, juicy manual.

Like the 500-page tome that came with Falcon 4.0, or even the respectable manual that came with AOK. I realise that many games don't need and can't actually have manuals of these proportions but it provides a tangible thing that you can't get from a warez site. I mean I still occasionally pick up the StarCraft or Diablo manuals and take a flick through the background stories, that's how valuable I find them.

Anyway, there's my two cents, perhaps some game developer reading this might take note and help steer me away from my life of crime.

James Masters

There is of course the long history of games manuals being used for copy protection, a practise which in our high tech times has fallen by the wayside.

While a game manual is a luxury that we all enjoy, when was the last time a game featured one? Civ III had a meaty tome but all of the really useful information was in the Civlopedia anyhow. Them's the breaks. Hey you, publishers - if you don't want to print a manual, bring back DVD cases!

No sequels for you!

Dear PCPP,
Way back in 1996 there was a game made called Toonstruck. Earlier this year at a Harvey Norman 'deanout' sale Toonstruck was in one of the bargain bins. It looked like a fun and

interesting point and click adventure game so I bought it. I found that it was one of the most enjoyable games I have ever played. Do you know if there will be sequel to this game anytime in the near future?

Kristopher Hen



Hate to disappoint but... there is no sequel to Toonstruck.

I'm not lame you are

Recently I acquired a cable internet connection. This is my first real experience of the net and I quite enjoyed it. My friend subsequently gave me his quake directory so that I could play him. He tweaked my cfg file giving me an ultra low ping. He still fragged my arse to kingdom come, his friends fragged my arse to kingdom come, but I still managed to squeeze in a few of my own. Just a few days ago I was playing a deathmatch game in which a few veteran hpb's told me to "f@#! off lpb". In fact a few of them joined in dissing me and calling me various names. I know quake is only a game so I stayed on and continued to play. I kept getting my arse fragged but who really cares? My point is the internet and game servers are not only for the gaming elite, its also for people who just want to enjoy it, not take it seriously.

David Nguyen

New Year's Evil

I'll set the scene. It's New Year's Eve. My best friend and only LAN partner has gone away for the holidays. I'm

trudging through another game I rented from the shop up the street (It's almost as boring as the fireworks on T.V.). Wishing I was in the grips of an intense 1 on 1 battle with my selfish, leisure needing, so called friend. (Keep it G-rated buddy - Ed.) It dawns on me that there's a whole world of willing human victims online.

I grab a handful of CD's and try logging on to various gaming sites only to find that alas, I need 'update 2.1 or official patch 3.2 or bugfix 6.66'. And when I proceed to download these little gems, the 'time remaining' leaves me shrieking louder than Ned Flanders seeing himself naked fist thing in the morning. I ponder... With SO MANY new games being aimed squarely at 'Internet Multiplay' perhaps the creators of all these fine products could think ahead and make their patches and upgrades a tad smaller or with a bit of smarts, spread them out a little so poor little dial-up connectees like myself can get a game tonight sometime. I know these things are needed to correct problems or enhance gameplay but who wants to wait all night long for a patch to play a game online that you just paid \$80 for a few weeks ago. I'm not made of the 'fabulous moolah' and it just cost me a packet to upgrade my PC enough to keep up with some of the newer games out lately. My patience and internet hours are due to expire at anytime. Oh well at least I have those fireworks on tv....3..2..1.. 'Happy New Year'.

Beanflipper

p.s. how's that song go again..?

Well Beanflipper, the future's bright, the future's a palindrome and the future is cable. Don't kid yourself, it may be today, it may be tomorrow, it may be last week, but one day you're going to need a serious connection. Forget patches, what about actually playing the games online with dial-up? Just check out this next letter...

Damned cheaters

Everyone always talks about how they were beaten by a wall hacker or someone who was using an aimbot. They can never prove this and usually use this as an excuse as a way of explaining how lame they themselves actually are without hurting their own feelings. But there is one type of cheat people keep forgetting to mention. This is a cheat that can be spotted a mile away, but yet people on the server do nothing about it. It is the broadband user on the 'dial up only' server. There are some people out there (like myself) who have a wife and children, can't afford broadband and can only get on the net when all of them are asleep. So you would expect a fulfilling night of fragging. But no, there is some loser who can't hack it against people with his own ping who have to play with those who are more disadvantaged than himself. And to make matters worse, the people on his team do not want to vote him off because they are winning because of him.

Then there is the other cheat. The admin of the dial up server playing on the server with a broadband connection. You can not even attempt at voting them off. I have encountered them on ozemail, netconnect and cybercycle dial up servers. The worst of them was tonight when I got kicked by the supposed person who created cybercycle because I questioned him over the fact that he had a broadband connection playing against us and whooping us on a dial up server.

So now when you think you are about to play on a dial up only server, are you?

Longtom

Hast thou lost faith in the Net?

I am ashamed to say that I once had. That 'once' actually started weeks/months ago and only ended yesterday. Not only had I lost my faith in the Internet, but to some degree, I even started to drift away from ALL computer kind *GASP!*

LOTM wins the knee trembling AMD Athlon TM processor 1500+ with QuantiSpeedTM architecture! The ultimate gaming CPU! Blistering framerates! Awesome responsiveness! And an attractive sort of Brown/ Orange PCB! Autumn colours are in, dontcherknow! Be sure to include your name and postal address with your letter.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I feel compelled to write this in response to comments in your magazine by a number of people writing in regarding Shonky Computer Dealers etc. I should explain that I am a computer dealer in SA.

One young fella writes in saying that he got dealt with badly by a computer shop that would not repair his computer under warranty for free. I understand there are a lot of shonky people but come on, how can you just accept what is said by these people without any background. I don't know any details of that one but it sounded shonky as! No details are given, perhaps you were the typical kind of person who sees the sticker "Warranty void if removed" on the back of the machine and thinks, "I'll be okay, I know what I'm doing". Or maybe you gave different details of what went wrong on different occasions, giving rise to the belief in the Dealer's mind that maybe your problems were caused more by you and/or your "computer g00r00" mates than by any failure of the system. Perhaps there was some overclocking involved?

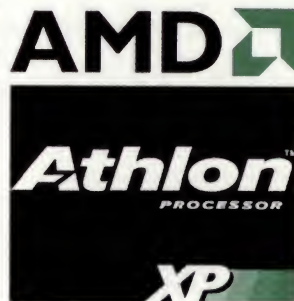
I am sure there are shonky dealers, but I would be willing to bet cash money that they are outweighed one hundred to one

by shonky customers. I run a small computer business, we work on a small profit margin and try to deliver good priced systems and service to people who are willing to pay the ridiculous prices asked in the brand name shops (YES! Just \$2500 for a CELERON with a BURNER, oooh big deal it costs \$1200 to put together and that's because of the 17" monitor they include otherwise it would be under \$1000).

Yet there are still people who try to scam you. I had one young bloke buy a video card from us and overclock it and it stuffed up. It was a GeForce2 MX, and though personally I have in the past overclocked my card (same type) I don't do so now. At first he told me he had overclocked it and now the graphics would stream across the screen and make games unplayable. I told him that he should not have overclocked it, that the card was not designed to be overclocked and that EVERY overclocking website STRESSES that overclocking is done at your own risk. One week later I hear back from him, and now the story is that the card was working fine, was not overclocked but in fact stopped working when it was taken from his machine by a mate and placed into the mate's machine, then it didn't work and still wouldn't work when put back in the original machine. I was a bit suss but offered to take the

card back and send it off to the manufacturer for them to check out. That was fine as long as I replaced the card, I was told. I said I was not willing to do that since he might overclock the next one as well, whereupon he very angrily denied EVER having overclocked the card in the first place. I said that was the best I could do so... Two weeks later I get a phone call from a very VERY irate father, who is on the other end of a telephone telling me that he is going to cause me physical harm because I sold his son a graphics card (which I offered to install for a mere \$10 in his home) which his son had installed and had never worked. I was quite surprised and asked about the two previous explanations of overclocking and then of being put into a mate's machine and not working from there on and also stating that his son had never suggested the card didn't work, in fact I had been told that it had worked brilliantly UNTIL a) overclocking and later b) mate's machine. He called me a %\$%#ing liar and once more threatened to show me just how messy a person's face can get when repeatedly hit with a hard object. I, like the young fella in issue 69, also contacted the police though with a bit more success than he had.

Dealers beware, Shonky customers are out there in multitudes



and if you don't recognize them for what they are you will lose money, time and probably customers because the shonky customer LOVES to make a big scene to try and force you to do what he wants. Consumer blackmail, essentially.

I, for one, will not accept that.

Love your magazine, keep up the good work but less of the bogus-sounding dealer-bagging letters eh, I mean seriously there are legitimate sounding complaints and there are vague complaints like that one in issue 69 which sound completely bogus to me.

Jason Boulton

Overclocking is definitely at one's own risk - methinks the chappy involved was more scared that his father would find out what he'd done than anything! Buyers beware, sellers beware!

This was entirely due to boredom. There are no good (new) games out. (Big call there, Slue - Ed.) That sucks. Sure, some games get good reviews every issue, but how many people will go out and spend their hard earned (or stolen) money on games that have a shelf life lower than the IQ of a piece of cheese? Some of those games only last a year, let alone the first few months due to terrible sales.

I'm not saying that I'm not looking forward to any games, far from it. I am very eagerly awaiting 'NeverWinter Nights' and such games as 'Unreal 2' (only since I am an UT fan, definitely not because of Unreal because in my opinion... I better not say.) But these great games (and all others that are so noteworthy that I completely forgot them) are not due out for a long time and just thinking about the games or looking at sites

devoted to the extremely limited amount of developer released screenshots is hardly entertaining.

So I have resorted to scouring the web for all varieties of nasty, hilarious websites for my PC satisfaction. Sites like somethingawful.com, killfrog.com and jaydonaldson.com have really renewed my faith in computers and the greater community in general.

Basically, until salvation is realised by the releasing of fantastic new games, humour is the way to go. Never give up hope in something that you believe in and humour will get you through the hardest of times (as will PC Powerplay).

Dr Slue
Perth W.A.

These mushrooms are tasty...

I was sitting back on my horribly deformed desk chair and decided to

really think about the future of my box (way too easy... must resist... - Ed.) and I wrote my ramblings like so.

Technology becomes stagnant and the new replaces the old, the flashy eclipse the dulled, the generations melt and become a new wave and the cycle repeats itself. In technical theory it is not technology that changes technology it is the people who influence technology that continue to meld it into their own vision of accessibility, profitability and genuine advancement. With this constant changing fuelled by the human experience and motive we find that computing stays within the realm of humanity's own repetitiveness. (Now you lost me... -Ed.)

In theory the cycle will eventually reverse itself to a state of self-destruction just as humanity has (eg

pollution). What we see from this is that we need to step back from the forefront of computational mathematics and things such as the drool worthy quantum theorems and redesign the entire spectacle which is the personal computer to save it from its own inevitable demise. A thousand minds seem to be dwelling on the fixing of current problems in what have become commonly used software produce. The financial stability of such markets as the nasdaq index has become not only a source of dependence for small and large business but a world wide phenomenon of financial growth. With these markets supporting technology that is not of a workable quality they are in fact teetering on the knife's edge of ruin. It may be well and good for a company to stake its claim on such a crowded market but

when what they are trying to sell is of a poor quality then they do not just distribute a faulty package they actually impede the true process of technological growth. As more and more companies try to hide their problems within their software or hardware the race becomes futile for the consumer resulting in the overall degradation of not just a financial vision but of a much larger piece of the human puzzle.

This vision is one not of a world in which companies become rich through their clever marketing schemes but where we use computers and related articles to further humanity for the better, to ease our lives and to create new avenues for those who shall come after us. At such a pivotal time as this in our existence we should be trying to put the best foot forward to give the next generation a platform from which to launch a thing of pure beauty, maybe even a whole new age of human existence. Are we ready to go?

From Mordain

Breath, mate, breath, you'll be fine... But seriously, on a larger scale the inefficient nature of personal computing is a definite concern for the sensible among us. Why have we always run horribly written operating systems on truly expensive hardware to play awkwardly coded games? Because we love them and as we all know, instant gratification comes ahead of other more worldly concerns. But Tracer Tong sure would be proud of you!

My girlfriend kicks you in the face



I must be the luckiest guy in the Sydney metropolitan area - nay the world. Not only do I live in the finest city on the planet and enjoy a standard of living well above that of starving people everywhere (is this going anywhere??? - Ed.) but I love PC games. Oh and one more thing: I have a woman, Greta - who ALSO loves games with wild abandon. Yes, my girlfriend is a 133t gamer and on occasion kicks my arse in any game

you'd care to mention. And she kicks your arse too - I've seen it happen.

Which brings me to my point. Now I consider myself a fairly well adjusted fellow and enjoy the ups as much as the downs in the world of games. While many gamers of all shapes and sizes can handle defeat with aplomb, it never fails to intrigue and amuse us that the so-called "133t" are the cry babies who can't handle a drubbing from anyone - let alone by a feisty young thing such as my girl. It's amazing how poorly adjusted many gamers are these days - hissy fits, the lot - in the face of defeat.

You should see these proto-nerds at the local games café lose their bottle when Greta rails their sorry arses. She enjoys the hunt but I never see her get upset when she's bested in multiplayer. We go, have a laugh then get on with our day.

Game obsessives, please note: there is ALWAYS someone better than you. Just cos you wear a t-shirt with some obscure J-comic on the front and don't wash your clothes regularly, doesn't make you special - it makes you weird. Sometimes that someone is a slim, forthright young girl and she's gonna kick your arse without mercy, I assure you. Get used to it and get a sense of humour too, hey?

Bab00ka

There goes the neighbourhood...

Co-op shmo-op

Isn't the last bastion of PC gaming a true co-op experience? While all this competitive gaming (Quakes, AoE, etc) is a bit of a laugh, why don't developers truly challenge themselves, and us, by offering some genuine co-operative games? Where the goal is not to beat the other player to the next pile of gold (a particular PS2 game comes to mind...) and where you really need to stick together to survive, or to even enjoy the game. I think class-based games like most recently Return to Castle Wolfenstein, are getting close but it's still against other humans.

Give us some direction! We want a great story that inspires us. I think the vast divide between single player games (ones with an actual STORY) and multiplayer games (which are basically sport) needs some bridging. Some of my fondest memories of games are of sitting around with a friend or two playing a game together - even when it was just a single player game. Stuff like adventures or RPGs. Taking turns, trying things out - being challenged.

I've long since left the boredom

of multiplayer games to the underaged. As long as developers fail to make some genuine attempts at co-operative gaming for the PC, we'll never know the joy of a truly different experience and (more importantly for them) they'll miss out on the dollars of a whole section of the gaming public.

Keep it Real
John Lloyd
Adelaide, SA

I'm ready to Start again

I am writing to you to express my thoughts on Cheat Codes (ominous capitals... - Ed.). I have grown to use, love and hate them for over 3 years. I think of them now as a way to spoil the game for you and therefore make you have no use for the game CD except to use it as a drink coaster.

I have wasted a lot of money on games that I just get frustrated with and ended up using Cheat Codes. I have had many regrets about using them on some very good games. Like Half-Life, Opposing Force, Blue Shift, Deus Ex, Hitman 47, Age of Empires I & II, System Shock II and Operation Flashpoint.

But one of the games that I have the most regrets on is Diablo II. I realise it is my own fault for downloading the trainer for it but it spoiled it for me. I felt slack and disappointed. I realise that cheats do nothing but spoil the game and waste your money.

Also another thing that has bothered me is the fact that Counter-Strike is almost infested with Corrupted Cheaters using Aim-Bot or some other horrid Hack. I was shocked to hear that someone actually BOUGHT a Wall hack from Ebay.

I now cannot play Counter-Strike without the game being wrecked by cheaters as it spoils the game.

I hope I have made my point clear that cheats do nothing but spoil the games and my advice is to stay away from them.

Regards
Daniel Petrie

We've long held this opinion. Cheats should be used only at the final point of unbearable frustration - like the end of Deus Ex for example. Not that we did do it... really, never. Why not go back and try these games as they were intended, without the cheats? You haven't experienced them that way yet have you?

Games extinction

To the uber gamers at PCPP,

I have taken some time off from gaming to do a little research on the

number of reviews in your funky magazine over the years. My results, to me are a little alarming. PCPP#69 was the best issue for reviews for ages. It had 16 reviews compared to 9 in PCPP#62 and 11 in PCPP#60. At the end of last year there were 15 reviews in PCPP#54 so it's about the same. You might blame the dry up of games



in the middle of the year due to publishers holding games back to Christmas but in PCPP#29, the October issue for '98, there are 17 reviews compared to 8 in the same period 2001. Why is this? Are you not choosing to review games? Or are there truly no games to review? If so, why is this? If it's because they say games are getting better so you don't need as many, I say that's not true.

The graphics in games has indeed improved massively but how many people can crank up Max Payne to all high graphics settings? I can't on my K-6 2 500 with a 32MB TNT2 with a 14" monitor (hmmm... - Ed.).

Her's my thoery. Back in the days when people marvelled at Voodoo, graphics weren't so good so designers focussed on gameplay over graphics. Nowadays, besides games like Operation Flashpoint, they just come out with an awesome graphics engine and run run, kill kill gameplay. I might be dreaming but look at it. Red Faction is Quake with the ability to blow holes in some selected walls. Max Payne, run around in circles and kill things in kick arse detail. What I'm calling for is more games to play, more reviews and more attention to gameplay! (I admit I enjoyed RtCW)

Your dedicated reader,
Panzerknaker
Age 12
(I play MA 15+ games with parental permission)

There you have it, from the mouths of babes. Dear Panzerknaker, we have trained you so well. As far as reviews go,

games have generally become more professional, longer and with more detail. Hence, more effort is required to make them, abracadabra! fewer big games. We always try to review quality titles but there are definite phases - and dry patches through the calendar. This certainly hasn't been helped by many US games not reaching our shores with any decent support (Dark Age of Camelot comes to mind). Rest assured coming issues will be stuffed with as many titles as is humanly possible to review in a month.

Deus Ex Perversions

Deus Ex is a wonderful distraction. One's persona can be hesitant and circumspect or full frontal and brutish. The experience can be played by 'decent' social rules or one can turn

and run amok robbing, killing, destroying. Levels can be navigated under different guises - very clever.

In the training section, up front, you can break from the set learning schedule and have fun - particularly with the unfortunate Private Winslow - a harmless volunteer!! Ha Ha Ha!! Yes, 'They' teach you how to lift and move unconscious souls out of the view of others, how to gently place the patient (corpse more like it before I was through!) onto a medical bed or somewhere equally soft and comfortable. What they did not see was the evil me, dragging old Winslow about - shutting him in doors, dropping the occasional plant pot on his nut, pushing him down steep flights of stairs and tossing him (hmpphh!) into the deep, flooded corridor. The poor, bloody volunteer! But what a laugh!!

So I've played through some levels, thoroughly immersed (not

unlike old Winslow) in the game play. I have generally been a nice sort of chap not bumping off the innocents to rob them of a few credits or fags etc.

I have reached the Hong Kong levels and the evil in me has returned...

Have fun this way: Firstly, ensure that there are no cops about to prevent you enjoying yourself. Next, arm yourself with tranquilliser darts or, better still, so as to see them shudder uncontrollably, the riot produced - what a shocker! Casually stroll up to a skirt-wearing character of the female kind and stun 'em to the ground! (Ooohhhh!!)

Here comes the best part... locate a quiet room furnished with a bed/chair/desk or other elevated surface. If necessary, clear the surface of artefacts such as books, plant pots etc. Go and fetch your female victim and pick them up - just as in training. Sorry Winslow! Lay them onto the

elevated surface and, wait for it!, step back, crouch down and look up their skirts!!! HAHAAHAHAHAHAHA. There are some weird programmers out there eh? Just waiting for their perversions to be 'uncovered'!

Have fun. enjoy Deus Ex - to the full!
Burge Snr



FROM THE FORUMS

Well this xmas period I have managed to put on over a stone because of all the turkey, xmas pud and cartons of beer I have consumed..I'll get tonight out the way and im gonna starve meself for the next fortnight..Any of you lot blessed with a belly of massive proportions due to over indulging this chrimbo..?

Have a sorted new year..

English John
Skaarj

I've put on 15kilos in 3months since giving up smoking

HeadRippa
Pit Drone

What kind of people do computer shops look for in their staff, is there a level of geekiness involved? Cause i really wanna get a job at a computer shop, though everyone ive been into seems to have extreme geeks (more geekier than I) and these ppl arent [337 in the slightest, in fact theyve probably never heard of [337 5P34K. And whenever i ask for a job they say "Uh, no sorry, we ahhh already have enuff staff, yeah thatll do" and the very next week they hire some1 else. Its getting to be a real pain in the rectum area. Somebody help me! I hate being poor.

WaRrAh
Tiefing

Some *#\$@!* just broke into my place, stole our stereo, our copy of

Half-Life and we don't know what else. We pulled up in the driveway and he ran out the front door and down the street.

My bf and I jumped into my car and chased him down the street. When we found him, he was sitting on a fence with our STEREO ON HIS LAP. So anyways, I figure out that he's a friend of my neighbour, and he starts going on about how it was our neighbours stereo, but I said that I wanted to have a closer look cause I knew damn well it was mine. So I started to get out of the car..now my bf and I are little people, and that guy was fairly big. So he's put the stereo on the ground, and got up and run off...on the way, he kindly dropped his name tag. So I rang the police and they now have sniffer dogs after him.

The only thing that we can figure out is missing is our copy of Half Life, but we can't tell if anything else is gone which sucks a lot. God knows what this guy wants with Half Life, I don't think he'd even know how to switch a damn computer on!

Sorry for this thread, but I'm ANGRY and stressed and I needed to vent in as many ways as possible.

Thanks for reading.

Lenore
Tiefing

I think they should put them in a place where they can't get out. They should be trapped in the path of the fire they created. They put peoples

lives in danger, destroyed their homes, wasted their money, destroyed Christmas for people in the path of the blaze, the firefighters and their family and lots of animals died, many young children wouldn't have got their Christmas gifts (at a young age they would be very upset). The fire bugs don't deserve a life.

Worms
Cacodemon

It's a tough question. Obviously, the penalties should be harsh - arsonists endanger life as well as property. However, pyromania is a mental disorder and as such we as a society have to make a decision about how much we take this into account. I'm not saying these particular arsonists are pyromaniacs, but some are, and we have to consider the implications of this.

Meathead
Overmind

What kind of music do people listen to when they're playing games? Do you go for hard, heavy industrial or metal music when you're playing Quake 3: Arena or do you prefer electronica or drum 'n' bass? What kind of music goes with what kinds of games?

Personally, I like to listen to industrial or metal music when I'm playing an FPS like HL, the Quake trilogy or Doom (I use JDoom for 3D-accelerated visual goodness). I also found that electronica goes well with racing games and that punk or

hard rock goes well with extreme sports games like 1080 or Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2.

Does anyone have any thoughts on this topic?

Self Bias Resistor
Beginner

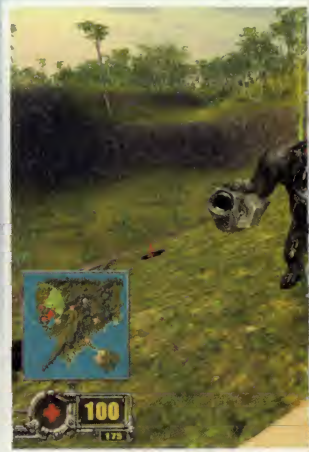
Punk does go well with any genre! While I'm playing an FPS, I like to listen to black flag or, even better, pennywise, as their manic pace gets the adrenaline pumping.

The Coconut King
Miyamoto

We saw LotR on Wednesday night and oh boy was it worth the crowds!!!! Not to sound ungrateful but all of my chrissie presents just didn't even come close to the majesty that was the Fellowship of The Ring. I did have a beef with it though - no Tom Bombadil and no Glorfindel (they swapped him rescuing Frodo with Liv Tyler's Arwen - for that special Liv Tyler moment!) - sorry but it was only because Glorfindel had the fastest horse in all of Middle Earth that Frodo was saved... Not because Liv Tyler was riding to the rescue! Bah.

That aside (it really is only a small thing) everything about it was absolutely beautiful... (it was well worth the wait and is deserved of the hype) - but if you have the La Premiere style seating at your cinemas -USE IT!!!! It's a 3 hour bum numbing movie that is worth every minute!!!!

Pelejaks
Tiefing



Vivisector: Creatures of Dr Moreau

Invisible Panthers bite your bum





Vivisectors cut living things open. Does this game condemn animal experimentation as demeaning to both humans and the animal kingdom? Is it an indictment of man's callous hunt for scientific advancement? Or is this simply a good excuse for a first person shooter with lots of freaky animals on a blood soaked rampage? If you must shoot something, genetically mutated monstrosities are certainly at the top of my list of targets. That's right, nothing better.

Thankfully a morally corrupt nasty devil named Dr Moreau was in a book some years ago and Action Games managed to pluck him from obscurity (and a truly awful film) into the limelight in their forthcoming action game. In a biblical sense, Moreau is the star. In reality, it's his hideous genetically modified animals that get the screen time. These include fire-breathing big cats, ModBeasts, Humanimals, Invisible Panthers and baboons with guns for limbs.

Vivisectors is a definite step towards a more frenetic, gun-toting killarama in comparison to Action Forms' previous outings that include Chasm: The Rift and Carnivores.

The game is powered by Action Forms' own in-house AtmosFear engine that combines both indoor and outdoor rendering technologies. The engine will support all modern hardware and deliver cutting edge visual effects. The big promise is the engine's

ability to process huge outdoor areas filled with photo-realistic vegetation. For the non-believers, take a look at these screenshots for a taste of wow.

Level processing is handled by the state-of-the-art Visual Compound Objects Level Design (V-COLD) system. It features "compound objects and a hierarchy of operands for boolean operations", resulting in a robust and easy-to-use level editing tool.

Vivisectors features an intuitive scoring system that rewards exploration and encourages smarter play. We're not exactly sure how this will work, presumably on time and efficiency. Earning points allows the player to raise levels in skills and upgrade weaponry. The RPG element, you might say, this is Action Forms' incentive for the player to keep moving, perhaps avoiding the problem of emptying levels and obvious spawn points.

Also of note is a distinctive waypoint system that draws the player through the game with the help of a bird's eye view map. These beacons prevent the tendency of players to get lost in huge levels. They also facilitate the regeneration of health, rearming and even the distribution of earned points.

More than a little intrigued (and somewhat puzzled), we wait for more news on Vivisector: Creatures of Dr Moreau.

John Dewhurst

Developer: Action Forms

Publisher: TBA

Due: TBA

URL: www.vivisector.com/english

Why Vivisector deserves a second look (According to the Ukrainian team's publicity):



"There are merely no restrictions on where you move within an area."

"Absolutely new indoor renderer incorporates full set of features being standard today, and more."

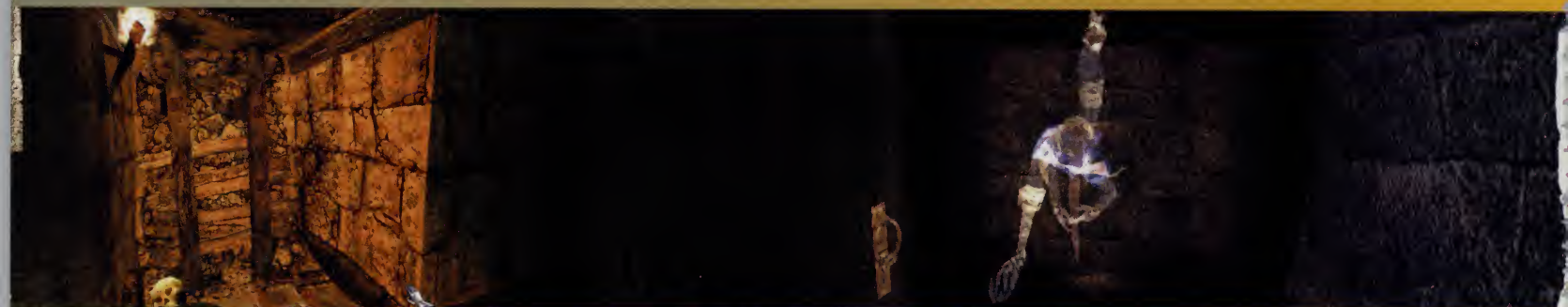
"The possibility to create and change geometry of the finished level in a trice."

"Witness what human genius that gone wrong way can achieve."



Arx Fatalis

Timothy C Best heads underground for some goblin-busting action



Dreadful mines, empty skulls

Dreadful doors, empty rooms

We've got Hercules heading into the underworld to kidnap Cerberus, Beowulf seeking vengeance on Grendel's mother and the fellowship hitting the Mines of Moria... people love trying to scare other people out of their loincloths, togas, tweed or Babylon 5 T-shirts with tales of deep, dark places.

Arx Fatalis follows in this fine tradition. In fact, French outfit Arkane Studios are taking on where Eye of the Beholder and Ultima Underworld left off. It might not sound too original but with Arx Fatalis, like any good subterranean venture, the deeper you dig the more interesting things get.

New Light

The world of Arx Fatalis isn't a happy, sunny one. In fact, the sun has completely given up the ghost - handed in its flaming orb membership. The resident Wise King during the fading light decided that his people's only hope was to move underground into old dwarven mines. Even the warring Ratmen, Trolls and Goblins realised trouble when they saw it, so all of the races pulled together to forge a new world which didn't depend on the sun or warmth from above.

This was all years ago and now only members of the traveller's guild can brave the frigid surface separating the city-states. Beyond that, routine has been re-established, and with it ancient racial bitterness and hate have resurfaced. If that wasn't bad enough, a slightly kooky priest has been involved in some unpleasantness (read: human sacrifice) in a bid to have the god of destruction move house into Arx Fatalis and make it his bitch (Such a charming turn of phrase - Ed).

In that vein, while a lot of the background is a bit out there, most of the RPG mechanics are fairly standard. You assign stats and skill points along fighter/mage/thief lines. You get experience for killing baddies and solving puzzles; your occupation is looter and so on.

Fighting is also fairly straightforward (for a first-person RPG) which makes getting into things quick and easy. You have weapon skills that affect armour penetration and damage while accuracy with the mouse

"Arkane Studios are taking on where Eye of the Beholder and Ultima Underworld left off"

Depths of RPG

Our hero is somewhat of an RPG cliché. No memory, just skills and an impressive debt on the karmic credit card. Poor little tyke starts in a goblin prison to boot. The development team have gone on the record saying they are making the RPG they've always wanted to play, and if that leads to some good-old conventions, so be it!

handles actually connecting with blows. The longer you hold an attack the harder you hit. You can dodge and strafe, and block with shield - all good stuff.

While this is all fairly standard, things get interesting where the character intersects with the world. The magic system is one example of this (check the boxout). The non-linear gameplay is another.



Darts anyone? Best of ten?

This is Agent 6 to Base, come in Base

Er... some kind of ballet dancer?



And so the castle set sail...

Le freak, c'est chic!



Dreadful stat sheets, empty spell slots

Dreadful spell books, empty rune pouches

Dreadful character sheet... oh I'm sick of this

Our hero will be placed on the central quests by the major characters but our boy will be able to shoot off on subplots and come back to the main storyline in a very roundabout manner. Apparently, you can even kill the good King if you want, which is fine, as long as you don't mind dealing with the fairly major consequences. Arx Fatalis is not a static world, things change as you make decisions, so don't expect everyone to go on business as usual if you do decide to "crown" the king.

Likewise, characters you come across will react to how you treat them, and your actions indicate how a conversation will turn without bogging things down in too much text. Furthermore, the non-player characters don't realise that you are the centre of the world and will talk amongst themselves and interact in their own colourful ways. You might catch goblins sharing a joke or you might want to start a fight between some likely lads and then slink away to watch the mayhem.

We're not in Kansas anymore

Speaking of slinking, the places you can slink into promise to get seriously out-worldly and epic, seriously quickly. Our hero gets tied up with the King and, in turn,

the regent of the gods and ends up travelling through the depths of the world on his quest.

The visual style of the game is generally very dark and fairly surreal. The underground setting might sound limiting but its focus is one of the game's strengths. Even in the areas where the walls are all the same stone, clever use of bump-mapping makes the walls come to life and it seems like you could reach across from your character's first-person point of view and feel the rough stone.

Besides the typical dungeon setting Arkane Studios have moved complete worlds underground (as the surface is only good for slushy-mix now). There are temples, shops, cities, lava flows, forges, castles, mines and so on. More to the point, there are all of the above for colonies of Trolls, Ratmen, Goblins, Dwarves and the Sisters of Edurneum, which sweep through medieval, industrial, tribal and Arabic styles, to name a few. There are around 40 different graphic styles and numerous languages and strange cultures to encounter. If there is one thing the French do well it's surreal art house. Get ready for this new French underground movement.

Ready your swords and prepare your packs, in a few months it will be time to get down with Arx Fatalis. ■

Developer:	Arkane Studios
Publisher:	Fishtank Interactive
Distributor:	Red Ant
Due:	2nd Quarter 2002



PREVIEW



WARLORDS BATTLECRY 2

The latest in a long, long line of strategy games is on its way.
Timothy C Best strapped on his Love Greaves +12 for a long, long hard look.

Battle for Etheria

Terracore 0 Credits Income 2 Credits

Campaign Options

Difficulty:
☐ Easy
☐ Moderate
☐ Hard
☐ Extreme
 Cancel Okay

Now that's some fancy menu work...

New Recruits Your Retainer



...I don't all with all this fancy menu work...

Choose your Race



...In my day a line and a flashing bar...

My friend looked over my shoulder as I loaded the preview code up. Watched as I selected Dwarves out of the array of races and then hurried me to turn up the volume. "I want to see if they have Scottish accents," he explained with a shrug. Do dwarves wear kilts, eat sheep stomachs or practice caber tossing? I asked. It was right about then my doughty hero did brogue: "You can take our lives but you cannae take our freedom!"

Whole New World

The sequel to SSG's first real-time strategy game is set to hit all the right clichés from the tree-hugging wood elves to the viciously in-need-of-dentistry demons and everything between. There will be 12 races (Fey, Dark Dwarfs and Demons being added to the roster), more hero classes and hero specialties than before and a whole new campaign structure and graphics engine.

The first Battlecry game was kind of short, squat and Scottish in construction. It worked, it had all the features, but it was just about as pretty as Dwarven stonework. The new graphics engine changes all that, providing some razzle-dazzle with particle spell effects,

blood animations, more variety in terrain and great character models. Although the whole thing is set in an isometric world, it is 3D and height is functional affecting line of sight and missile range.

Like other SSG games, the looks are not the key issue, it's the way it plays that counts. Players can take their heroes out for mayhem on the skirmish maps, challenge friends or co-workers in multiplayer or tackle the epic campaign mode.

"...quite impressive and could shape up to give Age of Empires II a run for it's money."

The campaign mode in this is totally different to the campaign mode in the first game. Now you have a map and choose which adjacent territory to descend upon like a plague. Each territory gives your horde certain benefits while you hold it, such as increased speed, mana regeneration, an attack bonus and so on, as well as a cash tribute and ongoing income. You'll get an idea of the resistance in the area and then you're off. It's

completely non-linear.

To stop things getting repetitive, different territories have different rules, like on the endless plains there shall be no fog of war or no walls built, as well as there being different game types. You've got the standard slash and burn thing, Slayfest, which involves racking up the greatest head count in a certain time, Assassination where you only need to take out the enemy hero to win, gathering a certain amount of

resources, raze all the buildings and so on.

It's All About Control

If you're thinking this has been all done in RTS games before, then you'd be right. Battlecry II also has a bunch of other things that have been done before too: patrol points, units can be grouped into squads, you can set general areas to attack so your whole force isn't



Going to the chapel and I'm gonna get slaughtered...



Meanwhile, after Sunday service...



...the parishoners turned nasty



Let's rock and roll!



Nice design, but as a seat it looks kind of uncomfortable

Choose your Identity

By what name shall you be known?

Default

Check a password for your hero (optional)



Dark Elf

Choose a mode

Normal Mode

You gain normal XP for winning a battle, but still gain some XP even if you lose.

Choose your Profession

Warriors are strong fighters who will battle to the death.



Warrior

This will have the following effects

Skill	Offense	Defence
+1	8	
+0	4	
+0	5	
+0	4	

Choose your Speciality

Fighters are well-armoured warriors who are tough to beat in single combat.



Fighter

This will have the following effects

Skill	Offense	Defence
+0	7	
+1	5	
+0	5	
+0	5	

...were good enough for me...

...you fancy modern kids...

...with your fancy (SHUT UP! - Ed)

targeted on one guy, you can cycle to the next free builder and so.

All of the gameplay tricks that make things easier to handle than an elf on laudanum are present as well as a few refinements. You can set not only waypoints but you can queue a series of troop orders by holding down the shift key. You can set attitudes not only so units run when they are hurt or fight to the death but so spell casters will use their spells sparingly or blow their load at the first sign of trouble and so on. It's the little things which make all the difference.

Difference is also the catch phrase for the various races. Playing each race genuinely requires new tactics and build lists. For example the Undead are incredibly tough and hit really hard but are as slow as a calculus class. While Dark Elves are long on sneaks and black magic, they have no infantry or cavalry upgrades and looked puzzled even at the mention of siege weapons. Dwarfs, on the other hand seem to live for ballista, catapults and cannons. Wood elves have one kick-arse hand-to-hand troop (walking trees) and a whole mess of hippy healing. Minotaurs have a troop list about as

short as their temper but make up for this by gobbling animals for health and a vast list of Taurean upgrades which keep their horny head-butt nasty to the end.

Tighter Than Dwarven Stonework

All up Battlecry II is looking quite impressive and could shape up to give Age of Empires II a run for it's money in sheer class and addictiveness. Like AoE it shies away from gimmicks and keeps the best bits running in the background so it's all just a lot of fun. For longevity's sake it will also include an amazingly comprehensive scenario design and editing feature and SSG promises to post game updates like new items, tools and custom AIs. Expect this second Battlecry to ring out loud and clear. It'll surprise a lot of people. ■

YOU'RE MY HERO

One of the real joys of Battlecry II is going to be in the building the legend of your hero. This guy isn't just an impressive looking icon with a few catch phrases; he or she is like a full character from a computerised role-playing game.

Heroes gain experience each battle. They find magic items, and matching sets give them special powers. As grow they choose a class (Rogue, Wizard, Warrior or Priest) and then specialise. Finally they are defined by spending ability points on special powers. My Dark Elf first became a wizard (over the Rogue or Priest options) and then specialised into Summoner. When she got ability points to spend she could have added a chance for one-hit kills (assassin-style), increased her stats, bought new spells, increased her caster level for all summoning spells, gained the ability to summon elite demons and so on. Just for Dark Elf Wizard alone there were three other specialities: Alchemist, Ice Mage and Necromancer.

This powerful and evolving mythic figure (and his or her retinue of individual, named, characters) will have the ability to totally change the way people play any given race but opening up a host of new monster powers and tactics. We don't need another hero... my arse!

Developer: SSG
Publisher: Ubisoft
Distributor: Ubisoft
Due: Autumn 2002



That's **FREEDOM**

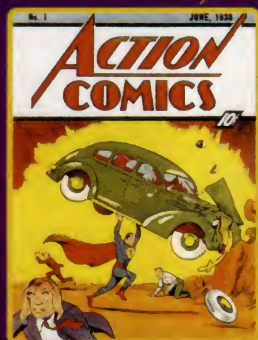
It has tasty comic book flavour, it has sweet 3D graphics, it has gameplay like nothing we've seen before and it's 100% Australian Made. Daniel Wilks buttonholed Irrational's Jonathan Chey to get the latest on the most eagerly awaited comic-book styled tactical RPG to come out of Canberra this year

30 most influential comics of all time



Detective Comics #1 - March 1937

Featuring a cover villain known as Chin Lung, Detective Comics #1 hold a special place in comic book history for being the first comic dedicated to a single theme: crime. The Detective Comics banner would later be shortened to a simple but iconographic DC.



Action Comics #1 - June 1938

Not only did this revolutionary comic change the face of comic culture by featuring the first Superhero, it scored a double whammy by introducing the worlds most beloved hero, Superman, the last son of Krypton.



Marvel Comics #1 - October 1939

Marvel Comics #1 was the original issue which spawned the entire Marvel Universe, later spawning such memorable characters as Spider-Man, Daredevil and the X-Men in all their different incarnations. Marvel Comics #1 introduced the world to such characters as the Human Torch and Submariner.



Alpha Flight #106 - March 1992

Inside the issue, Northstar, a member of Canada's elite superhero team, battles an aging superhero whose rampage through the streets of Montreal is fuelled by society's indifference towards his gay son's AIDS-related death. With three words Northstar saved the day and caused a media storm. The words? "I am gay."



Superman #1 - Summer 1939

The first comic ever devoted to a single hero. Selling over 200,000 copies of the first issue with far more in demand, Featured mostly reprinted stories from the older Action Comics title. No matter - the popularity of Superman soon gave birth to another book, and another. Now the Man of Steel is everywhere, from Cereal boxes to Broadway musicals.



Daniel Wilks: I've read on the net that Freedom Force will be kind of a cross between RTS and RPG. Can you clarify that for us?

Jonathan Chey: Yeah, in some kind of vague way. We've been calling it a tactical RPG I guess because it's got light roleplaying elements but the main focus of the game is on tactical combat. In terms of how the game actually plays, I don't think there's any game that's like it but probably the closest game out there is something like Baldur's Gate where you have a small group of characters and you're controlling them in real time but you tend to pause the game quite a lot to issue fairly complicated tactical orders. Then of course you have the added complexity that it's 3D. I think that the other major difference is that Baldur's Gate is played on what is essentially a painted backdrop whereas this game is played on an interactive mutable environment with proper physics and things that blow up and fall over and things that you can actually interact with instead of just walking over the top of.

DW: So you can pick up cars...

JC: Everything in the environment has some form of interaction - can be destroyed, can be picked up and used as a weapon or hurled. There are very few walls as such in the game that just can't be destroyed.

Sometimes we do put in some of those, like when you're underground and so on you can't tunnel off into the void but mostly pretty much everything in the environment is destructible or interactive, or both.

I think one of our design philosophies is really that simulating these kinds of systems so you're putting in a real physics system, which adds a lot of richness to the game. When you shoot an arrow, games like Baldur's Gate roll a dice to see whether it hits, whereas in our game when you shoot an arrow we fling our little projectile into the world and if it gets pushed in mid flight it gets pushed, if it hits something it hits something, if it bounces off something it bounces off something.

You've now gone from a system where the only things that can happen are things that you sat down and wrote a rule for to a system in which anything can happen within the bounds of your simulation, so if you throw a car at somebody and you miss and it hits a building and the building falls down and a big explosive barrel falls off the building and rolls over the road and blows up and a fire hydrant bursts, that can all happen without us having to sit down and script it out and that I think is our approach

to most of these things.

DW: What type of comic book influences would you say the game has, because from the images I've seen so far I can see the influence of people like Jack Kirby and Will Eisner.

JC: The most important influence of this game has been the personal style of Rob Waters, who's our concept artist. He of course has been influenced by lots of other people. He really likes and is a big fan of the sort of retro Silver Age, 60's Marvel and DC stuff. That obviously comes through in his work. I can't really speak for him too much in terms of what his greatest influences really are but clearly we are making an attempt to have a kind of retro, nostalgic feel.

This is not a game about 90's comic book characters. This is a game about 60's comic book characters. This particular game stays fixed in the 60's. Our plan for the franchise is to push it forward through time in subsequent games. So Freedom Force 2 will move forward. That will mean a change to the art style a change to the plot the dialogue and probably even the gameplay. We'll push forwards through the 80's and then into a darker 90's into the 21st century with bionics and what have you. The themes of the story will change too. Freedom Force



Watchmen #1 - September 1986

Writer Alan Moore used the super hero medium to deconstruct characters such as the insane Rorschach (who his identity behind a constantly changing ink blot mask) and the homicidal misogynist The Comedian. Important in so many ways, but mostly for bringing comics into the mainstream and proving once and for all that they have something important to say.



Spawn #1 - May 1992

The comic that single handedly put Image comics on the map, boosting it up into the ranks of Marvel and DC. It also made creator Todd McFarlane a very, very rich man due to the fact that for the first time a large company had let a creator keep the rights to his own creation.



X-Men #1 - September 1963

X-Men is important for myriad reasons: for being so popular, for the concept of mutation as being the next step in evolution, or for treating teenagers like characters instead of sidekicks. Probably most important was the fact that it introduced Magneto, a villain who fought not for money or power, but for justice.



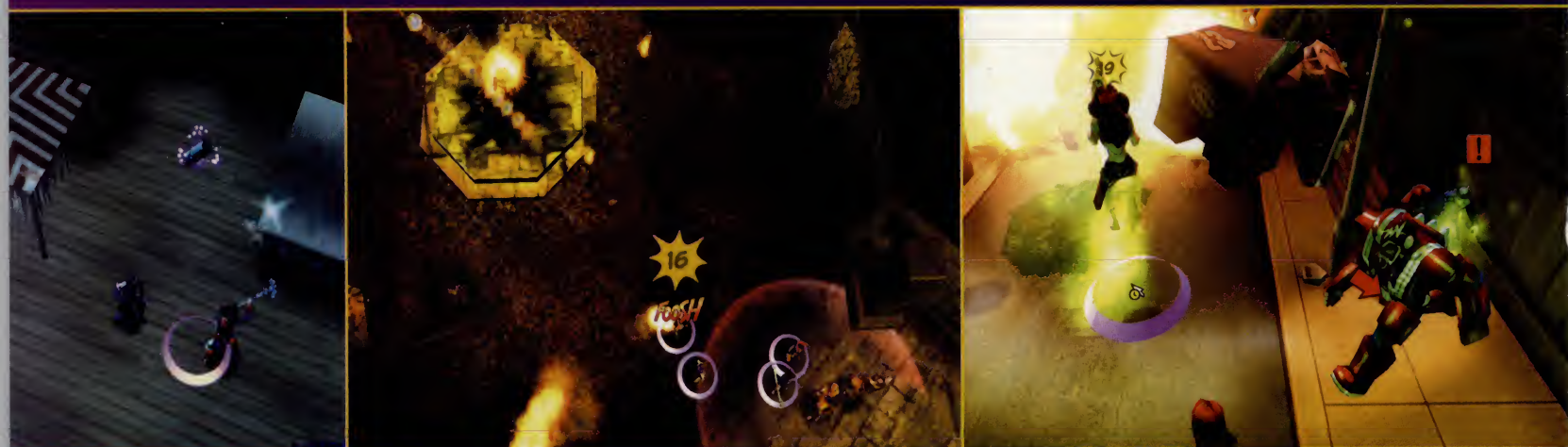
Maus #1 - 1986

Though it may seem a little trivial to tell a Holocaust survivor's story casting mice as the Jews and cats as the Nazis, Art Spiegelman's Maus has the deserved honour of being the first comic to be awarded a Pulitzer prize. Absolutely amazing in its heartfelt story and warmth, Maus firmly cemented the idea that comics were a true literary art form.



Knightfall #1 - 1993

In 1993 a new and terrible villain broke the Batman, shattering his mind and his back. Down for the count, the mantle of the bat was taken up by Bruce Wayne's protégé, the almost insane Azrael. Azrael beat Bane, but seeing the lengths to which he went to beat the villain caused Bruce to re-train his body and reassume his role.



is very kind of naive and non-violent. You beat people up in a non violent way (laughs). You pass out. Nobody ever dies.

DW: So they're only ever knocked unconscious and taken away by the police?

JC: Only to revive later. It's a lot of destruction but there's no blood or dismemberment, it's nice and naive.

DW: Can you give us some kind of teaser as to the plot?

JC: I'm not quite sure what's been released so far but the basic plot of the game is that there's a mysterious substance which gives people super powers, which we call "Energy X". It has an alien origin and is released onto the Earth. It falls down in these little canisters which break open and sort of randomly hit people and those people receive super powers that are related to their personalities or their lifestyles, thus are created super heroes and villains. It's essentially a random process.

The baddies who get hit by it get even badder and the frustrated heroes that are hit by it are given the opportunity to express their heroism. The whole plot kind of drives

forward from there. The original source of this energy becomes known. The player is essentially gathering together over the course of the game a group of these heroes who are emerging after this distribution of "Energy X". As you play through the game you bump into people who have been effected by it in a good way or a bad way - sometimes there's misunderstandings and you may fight someone only to realise they're actually on your side.

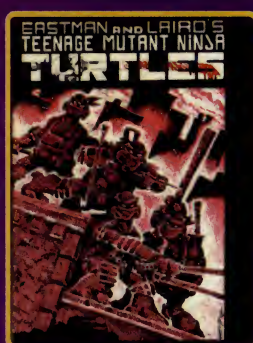
Anyway, throughout the course of the game you encounter a bunch of different heroes, some of whom will join up with you automatically and some of whom become available to be recruited if you've built up enough prestige whilst playing the game so essentially you can unlock additional characters onto your team if you're doing well. There's a plot arc which takes you through fighting a bunch of super villains all of whom have their own plots to destroy or take over the world. Of course there's a central bad-guy pulling all of the strings behind the scenes in that classic kind of comic book way.

DW: Will you be able to create your own characters or will there be set of starting characters that you can later customise?

JC: Both. This is what I think is probably the most important feature of the game. We've got this whole RPG system and we've used it to create 14 heroes who you can acquire during the game or play in multiplayer. As well as those you can go and build yourself a character from scratch using the RPG system. I'll get back to that a bit more in a second but you can make a custom character which you can then use in a multiplayer match or you can recruit into a campaign. Again we use this prestige system so you can build yourself a super powerful character but you're going to have trouble recruiting him because you won't be able to gather enough prestige to recruit him.

DW: So prestige works like an experience points system?

JC: No. There's actually an experience points system too, they're very similar. Prestige determines who you can initially recruit into the team so if you build a very powerful character then you have to wait



TMNT #1 - June 1984

Only 3000 copies of the first issue of the series were released, more for fun than anything else. Nearly 20 years on, TMNT, a spoof of the grim and gritty comics of the 80's like Daredevil and the X-Men, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is the most successful creator-owned comic ever, making its creators, Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird very rich men.



Sandman #1 - January 1989

Brainchild of British writer Neil Gaiman featured the Endless, a family of ideas, Dream, Destiny, Death, Delirium, Desire, Despair and Destruction. Based around Dream, the comic told numerous stories of wonder and terror. Also famous for changing Death from being a skeletal figure to being a chipper and cute Goth chick.



Batman #1 - Spring 1940

The second hero to receive a comic all to himself, Batman #1 also introduced two of the greatest villains of all time, much praised and copied until this day. Portrayed in comics, movies, TV, cartoons, games, books and any other type of media you can name from 1940 onwards, Batman #1 was the first appearance of The Joker and Catwoman.



The New Gods #1 - March 1971

Nothing less than epic in scope, comic legend Jack Kirby sadly did not get to finish his magnum opus, The Four Worlds Saga which kicked off in The New Gods #1 due to artistic differences with DC comics. Going over four separate titles, the saga introduced many popular new characters and villains into the DC universe.



Fantastic Four #52 - July 1966

In the same year that saw the militant black political movement, The Black Panthers, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby introduced the world to its first black super hero. An African prince with super strength and agility, the Black Panther graces comics still.



until you've accumulated enough prestige to recruit him. Alternatively you could build a weaker character recruit him early on, then as he stays with the team he accumulates additional experience which you can use to upgrade him. So there is a similarity between those two systems.

It's really a question of where the character starts out. If you're playing a multiplayer match you just look at the prestige values to make sure that both sides have characters that sort of sum up to the same level.

Just getting back to the character building the other really important things about that are we have the traditional sort of RPG system with stats and attributes you can buy for your characters but I think the thing that sets us apart and a thing that I've never actually seen in a game before is our custom power system where basically you can just go in and you can create any power you like for your character using the same system with which we built all of the characters shipped in the game.

You get to choose whether you want to build a melee attack or a beam attack or a

shield or whatever and then you go into a screen where you pick the type of damage that power does, how much damage it does, what its range is, does it knock people back does it stun people, if it's a projectile does it track the target. Basically it's a sort of open ended system for creating super powers.

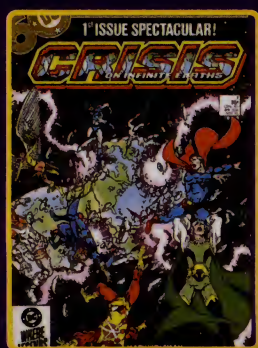
In addition to setting up all that game data on the power you also pick what type of animation you want the character to use when they fire that power, which effect you want attached to that power. This is to allow people to create their own favourite comic book characters. That in itself I think is kind of a first but as well as that we also really want to support people making their own modded characters so we've got a whole system where at various different levels of commitment people can do their own thing.

At the lowest level people can go in and create their own skins for characters. That's already kick started because we released a character viewer on the web 5 or 6 months ago now and we have 500 or 600 skins that people have made already just on some of the meshes we have released publicly. That

community are already very excited and all they can do at the moment is look at the characters. As soon as the game ships they'll be able to just dump those skins into the right folder and then you can go away and build your own character based on and around that skin - create his powers for him and then drop him into the game. That's pretty amazing. I know people are going to go nuts about that. Then of course then even more hard-core people will be able to create their own meshes, create their own animations, create their own effects for new powers and so on.

DW: So you're fully supporting the mod community?

JC: Yeah. That's really important because one of the things that we realised about doing a comic book/superhero game is that you can't possibly create enough content. I mean, there are so many comic book characters and so many kinds of characters and so many things they can do. We really have to rely on the user community to flesh that out. We've created a really cool set of characters, but they're not going to satisfy



Crisis on Infinite Earths #1 - April 1985

Fifty odd years of parallel Earth theorising had made things difficult for new DC writers who wanted to revamp their favourite characters. The solution was simple - write a 12 part mini series in which everything blew up and every single character that DC had ever published made a guest appearance. The end result was a new DC universe and re-written histories for all the major characters.



Captain America #1 - March 1941

Captain America was the first untested comic book hero, his first appearance being his first issue. Captain America also has the dubious honour of one of the most widely copied characters in comics with flag waving clones ranging from the almost identical Super Patriot to the communist busting and very forgettable Fighting super American.



All Star Comics #8 - December 1941

Female crime fighters in comics before 1941 had been so ludicrously attired (in stiletto heels and an evening gown in the case of the Blonde Phantom) that they could not be taken seriously. A psychologist. William Moulton Marston wrote article concerning this and as a result was asked by All Star Comics to create a suitable female hero. The result - Wonder Woman, the most popular female comic character of all time.



Fantastic Four #1 - November 1961

In 1961, comic book legends Jack Kirby and Stan Lee put Marvel on the map with this title. Revolutionary in so many ways, Fantastic Four did away with hero cliches, making the team more of a public family that a secret team, more concerned with interpersonal problems than saving the world (though that happened in spades). The characters were real, the stories frequently touching and the art amazing.



All Star Comics #3 - Winter 1940

During 1940, fledgling company DC reasoned that if individual heroes were popular, putting them all together in a team would make them amazing. They were dead right and the Justice Society of America was born. Made up of characters like Flash, Hawkman, Green Lantern and the Atom the JSA was the first super-team in comics.



people's demands, you know, like "I want to play Spiderman", apart from the licensing issues. That's been very important to us. I think people are going to get really excited about that.

DW: How were the character concepts developed?

JC: For our characters? That was really a collaborative enterprise between Rob Waters who I mentioned before as our concept artist and Ken Levine who's our story writer and character developer. I'm not sure I can say a lot of how they came up with them - they just sat down and came up with a bunch of ideas. That was a fun part of the process early on, just dreaming up different kinds of characters. There are always a few kind of schematic characters that always occur in comics.

DW: They really seem to be your truly archetypal 60's characters; you've got your patriotic strong guy...

JC: Yup, and your flame using guy and the super fast guy. I think there are a few really kind of original and quirky characters but there are also these archetypal comic

book characters, which is what we wanted. The goal here was to give people that nostalgia factor, not just present something completely new to them.

DW: Was the development of Freedom Force influenced in any way by the current media hype surrounding comics and super hero characters?

JC: I think it was just fortuitous - it was one of those times when people seem to be thinking about things at the same time. We've actually been thinking about a super hero game for years and we just got the opportunity to do it. I think the whole thing kind of kicked off before the upsurging interest which we've been really appreciating but was really just coincidence. Marvel is definitely making much more of an effort to break out. There are a number of characters that have really been under exploited. Lets just hope that the upcoming films are above the level that some of the previous comic book translations have been.

The X-Men movie gave me hope. They're actually spending real money on the films now. Hopefully there'll be some kind of

synergy there. Marvel has a setup with Activision where they're doing some X-Men games, which I think are kind of unimaginative and unambitious games. There's nothing else in development or on the horizon that we know of that's going to compete with us in terms of what we're trying to do with the game.

DW: The simple fact that you can make your own hero pretty much means that you are head and shoulders above any other super hero game out there.

JC: Yeah and also the team based dynamics help I think. There's nothing else that's really tried to capture that. The big kind of design goal for us was to make it so that you need to use a team of characters to win, that you don't just take one guy in and turn it into what is essentially a beat-em up. We want this to be a tactical game where you have different characters with different strengths and weaknesses. They have to be employed as a team in order to be truly effective. That's what we spent a lot of time on, trying to create the interface for that too.



Superman #75 - January 1993

Issue #75 saw the world shocked and news reports around the globe report on the fact that Superman, the Man of Steel was dead. The world literally mourned the passing of its favourite hero. Though he may have been a fictional character his impact has been widespread through every walk of life. Though he may not have been the first major hero to be killed and brought back he was by far the most famous.



Animal Man #26 - 1990

The final issue penned by Grant Morrison had the very fitting title Deus Ex Machina. Animal Man confronts his ultimate nemesis, the writer himself, Grant Morrison and discovers in the process that he is a fictional character. Morrison apologises for everything he has done and re-writes Buddy's history, making it a good deal happier. This issue added a level of post-modernity to comics that had previously been unheard of.



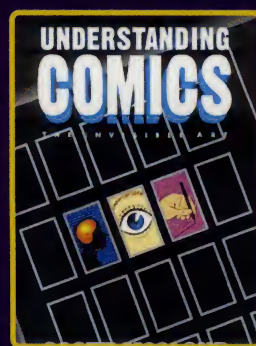
The Spirit - June 1940

Created by comic book legend Will Eisner and operating from a secret underground bunker located under his own grave, the Spirit was the first comic character designed for more mature audiences. Supposedly killed in the line of duty, police officer Denny Colt fought crime using his status as a dead man, clad only in a blue suit, fedora and domino mask.



Strange Tales #110 - July 1963

In the backup story the comic reading world was introduced to a character by the name of Dr Strange. The total antithesis of superheroes, Dr Strange was slow, methodical, old and fought with his mind, not his fists. The first and greatest wizard character in the Marvel lineup, Dr Strange has been going strong for nearly 40 years.



Understanding Comics - 1993

It figures that it would take a comic to explain the comic medium in terms of cultural relevance and importance. In 1993 Scott McCloud wrote the seminal work on comics, explaining why they exist, why they work and why we love them.



DW: Now for the big question, will we need a super system to run the game?

JC: I believe our minimum spec is a PII300 with a 16Mb video card and 64Mb RAM. It's a pretty low spec. We have a lot of detail options which can be turned off. It's been a challenge actually, that spec. We have the game quite decently running on that machine. The recommended spec will probably be closer to a 500MHz machine with 128Mb RAM and something like a GeForce II. It still runs fine on the base machine.

DW: So, when can we expect to see it on the shelves?

JC: I don't know about Australia but I think it should be on the shelves in late March or early April. It should make it out here by then.

DW: We can't wait!

THE SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT

Computer games aren't the only contentious media out there. Throughout the last century there have been crackpots and soap-box visionaries who see sedition and the corruption of family values. Whereas now days they might ban GTA3 for violent content, back in the golden age - the 50's - comics were the target of societal ire. Leading the charge was a man named Dr Frederick Wertham, the chief psychiatric consultant to the Chief Censor of the United States Treasury Department, a lecturer at Yale Law School, a consultant to the Juvenile Aid Bureau and had been the senior psychiatrist for the New York Department of Hospitals.

For years he had believed comics to be a major cause for the delinquency of the nation's youth and a vocal critic. Seemingly never having said enough on the subject, he did a series of public lectures and print interviews, ending with the publication of his anti-comic book. He claimed comics helped reinforce, and even possibly produce, reading disorders and claimed that youths with reading disorders had a noticeably higher chance of becoming delinquents. He claims that comics were the sole reason for any type of unusual sexual acts in children. Again, he claimed to have collaboration from

juvenile sex offenders eager to agree with him. He claims that the difference between comics and pornography for adults was that one was meant to attract perverts, the other, comics, was meant create them. In his own words:

"Sometimes Batman ends up in bed injured and young Robin is shown sitting next to him. At home they lead an idyllic life. They are Bruce Wayne and 'Dick' Grayson. Bruce is described as a 'socialite' and the official relationship is that Dick is Bruce's ward. They live in sumptuous quarters, with beautiful flowers in large vase and have a butler, Alfred. Batman is sometimes shown in a dressing gown. The young boy sometimes worries about his partner. It is like a wish dream of two homosexuals living together. Sometimes they are shown on a couch, Bruce reclining and Dick sitting next to him, jacket off, collar open, and his hand on his friend's arm. Like girls in other stories, Robin is sometimes held captive by the villains.

"Robin is a handsome emphatic boy, usually showing his uniform with bare legs. He is buoyant with energy and devoted to nothing on earth or interplanetary space as much as to Bruce Wayne. He often stands with legs spread, the genital region discreetly evident."



Planet Comics #1 - January 1940

The first comic to look solely at science fiction as a genre also introduced the world to suitable female space attire: the metallic brassiere, hotpants, gun-belt and GoGo boots combo.



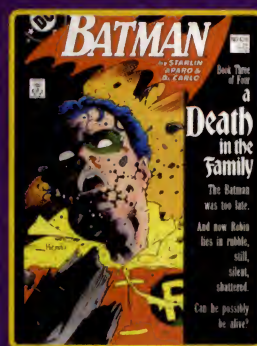
Amazing Fantasy #15 - August 1962

#15 saw the birth of one of Marvel's most popular characters, Spider Man. Unlike the other heroes of the day, Spider Man was fallible, made mistakes, lamented his powers and was more concerned with paying the rent than saving the world. More than any other character at the time, Peter Parker, the Spider Man realised that great power came at great cost.



Amazing Spider-Man #96 - May 1971

Infamous for not complying with the Comic Code Authority, #96 dealt with the evil of drug use. The CCA determined that any mention of drugs was a no no, even if portrayed in a bad light so in retaliation Marvel refused to comply, issuing the comic without the CCA stamp. The result was a massively popular issue and a serious blow dealt to the credibility and power of the CCA.



Batman #428 - September 1988

Batman #428 saw the shocking death of Robin. Beaten severely with a crowbar and left at a bomb site, Robin was killed. An important event to be sure but made doubly so by the fact that it was the readers who decided Robin should die. DC held a readers poll to determine the fate of the Boy Wonder. The results were close with 5343 in favour of death and 5271 in favour of letting him live. The rest, as they say, is history.



Daredevil #158 - May 1979

When Frank Miller took the reigns of Daredevil the hero changed. Instead of being a two bit, wise cracking Spiderman he became a gritty and fallible man, capable of doubt and self pity. A far more human character than ever seen before, the new Daredevil is best summed up in his own words, "We're only human... we can be weak," he tells a young boy. "The only way to stop us from killing each other is to make rules, laws. And stick to them."

Game of the Year 2001 - An Invitation to Vote



For the answer to that burning question "was 2001 a great year for games?" flick back to our Roundtable on page 22. But for a warm and fuzzy trip down midterm memory lane, in these six pages we'll take a brief look at the games that made 2001.

These are all the games we reviewed in our 2001 issues. Above the line, our top 25 picks in the order we reviewed them. Below the line, a concise list of every game to grace the pages of PowerPlay. Your task: to choose from among them your top 10 games of 2001.

In PCPP#70 we provided you with a voting form, and this month we do it again. The voting form will also appear in the next two issues so you have plenty of time to lodge your vote. Please; only vote once! We want to get a true and accurate indication of which game in 2001 our beloved readers believe to be the best. Now, let the cavalcade of stars begin:

Happy New Year

January started with a big splash in the RTS pool; Red Alert 2 (PCPP#56) was here at last. It was a bit of a sly dog, sneaking in after barely a year's development time and provided us with a fresh chunk of classic Westwood RTS action. Indeed, one greenhorn reviewer was heard to proclaim that RA2 was the game Tiberian Sun should have been. It's was no revolution, but sometimes you want a bit of comfort gaming, right?

Sunny January also gave us Hitman (PCPP#56), which for a while paraded as a thirdperson shooter, but careful investigation on the part of Brett Robinson revealed it to be a puzzle game, perhaps a little limited for some, but the combination of highly detailed environments, super-realistic weapons and crazy baldness made it a classic of concept, if not of execution.

Exchanging automatic weapons fire with Chinese waiters as you stormed a restaurant in pursuit of a triad boss, then strangling the poor dude in the jacuzzi after donning a bellboy's

uniform and frightening the maids... where am I going with this?

Lara who?

And yet, in the same issue we found No One Lives Forever (PCPP#56), a game where cutting-edge 3D graphics weren't necessary to provide a refreshing and original take on FPS.

Saucy Cate in her saucy jumpsuit with her saucy guns; it was like Bond except... curvier.

Here was a game that was all about set-pieces; skydiving in pursuit of the bad guys, diving to the floor in posh hotels as snipers pepper the facade from across the street. We can't wait for the sequel, and drool at the thought. A little later in the year, March to be precise, gave us a possibly superfluous add-on to Quake3 in the form of Team Arena (PCPP#58). To be honest, we weren't that impressed with it; to us open spaces and a chaingun do not a Game of the Year make. But members of the PCPP Community beg to differ. They cite the improved gameflow, the new

HIGHLIGHTS

Red Alert 2	91%
Hitman	90%
NOLF	90%
Q3 Team Arena	57%
Giants	86%

sense of teamplay and of course the massive levels.

On the other hand, Giants: Citizen Kabuto (PCPP#58) was hugely impressive and yet so demanding the PCs of the day that as far as we could figure out nobody except industry professionals could ever hope to play it. But lurking beneath the over-excitabile graphics engine was a crazy combination of action, adventure, RPG, RTS and even jetski racing. And how about that nude Delphi patch huh? Huh? You filthy minded...

Anarchy Online
Evil Twin
The Longest Journey
WW3 Black Gold
Stronghold
Zax: The Alien Hunter
NHL 2002
Spiderman

*68 86%
*68 70%
*68 88%
*68 79%
*68 93%
*68 72%
*68 82%
*68 67%

Sub Command
Madden 2002
Links Championship Edition
Red Faction
Project Eden
Throne of Darkness
Red Alert 2: Yuri's Revenge
Dragon Riders of Pern

*68 65%
*68 78%
*68 84%
*67 81%
*67 80%
*67 91%
*67 88%
*67 60%

Monopoly Tycoon
FA Premier League Manager
Heroes Chronicles
Divided Ground
Pool of Radiance
Shogun Warlord Edition
Conquest: Frontier Wars
The Nations

*67 75%
*67 70%
*67 65%
*67 75%
*66 79%
*66 86%
*66 85%
*66 70%

Schizm
International Cricket Captain
The Sting
Eurofighter Typhoon
Anachronox
Fly! II
BGII: Throne of Bhaal
Sudden Strike Forever

*66 55%
*66 71%
*66 73%
*65 55%
*65 85%
*65 71%
*65 89%
*65 88%

Get your vote in now and go in the draw to win this phat monitor from Mitsubishi: 22 inches of raw blistering visual pleasure! It's the biggest monitor on the market! It's immense! It's coming to get me! Help!



Through the Looking Glass

Two other games in March deserve special mention. First up was American McGee's Alice (PCPP#58), one of the first third-party titles to use the hugely impressive Quake3 engine. Alice was about nightmarish level design and atypical weapons. Where else in gaming could you take down a pepper-sneezing psychotic duchess with a pack of bladed cards? Sure, the levels were somewhat linear even if they did look great, and the game did rely rather heavily on the End-of-Level Boss mode of progression. Which is kind of old-

fashioned in our opinion.

The second March game that we just have to mention is Tony Hawk 2 (PCPP#58). John discovered this classic stashed away with all the other dodgy novelty sports sims like Pro Surfer, installed it and was astounded to discover a rich and rewarding gaming experience. Numerous options, endless permutations, cool tricks, if only all gaming could be so old school and yet so fresh. Regardless of where Tony winds up on your list, this is a game everyone should own.

other hand, the very nature of the sport meant the tracks were all circular. DTR did however pave the way for Leadfoot (PCPP#64) which allows you to turn right on occasion and even hit the occasional jump!

May gave us cause to perk up a little because not only was this our 5th Birthday issue, it also contained the long-awaited review of Black & White (PCPP#60). And yeah, the review did piss

smother villagers in his own poop, so maybe it was a classic after all.

Finally though, Tribes2 (PCPP#60) hit the scene and team-based multiplayer was set to never be the same again. Massive improvements to the original, gameplay enhancements, better weapons, Dynamix even integrated suggestions from the Tribes community. Most obvious was the codifying of the 'ski' technique, where an exploitation of

May was not only our 5th Birthday but also contained the long-awaited review of Black & White

HIGHLIGHTS

Alice	83%
Tony Hawk 2	92%
DTR: Sprint Cars	87%
Black & White	92%
Tribes 2	93%

GOTY2001

Brown rings

To April and May now, and while the traditional jokers' month was light on the ground for games (how about that Duke Nukem Forever review huh?) April did produce Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars (PCPP#59) from Ratbag. Allegedly the second most popular motor sport in the US, DTR was all about driving a dodgy car around a circular track. And yet, the level of tactical thought required to stay in the groove was surprising. Still on the

a lot of people off because we dared to suggest that Molyneux's opus wasn't the greatest game in the universe, and that there were more exciting experiences in digital entertainment than perpetually picking trees for villagers. But on the other hand B&W was undeniably something new, and the AI routines of the creature were quite impressive. After all it was possible to teach him to

the game engine in the original allowed experienced players to slide down hills super-fast. Rather than 'fix' this, Dynamix turned it into a legitimate tactic. Then, unfortunately, Dynamix collapsed and the future of support for Tribes2 remains hanging by a thread. Teamplayer game of the year, or a brief diversion from CounterStrike?

Legends of Might & Magic
Original War
Mechcommander 2
Half-Life Blue Shift
Gangsters 2: Vendetta
Tropico
Leadfoot
Offroad Redneck Racing

*65 40"
*65 74"
*64 84"
*64 78"
*64 51"
*64 71"
*64 80"
*64 57"

Elite Force Expansion
Merchant Prince 2
I-War 2: Edge of Chaos
The Moon Project
Startopia
Z: Steel Soldiers
Conflict Zone
Alone in the Dark 4

*64 30"
*64 42"
*63 85"
*63 87"
*63 88"
*63 86"
*63 84"
*63 69"

Train Simulator
Outlive
Stunt GP
Gunlok
X-Com Enforcer
Desperados
Settlers IV
F1 World GP 2000

*63 59"
*63 56"
*63 73"
*63 81"
*63 71"
*62 86"
*62 65"
*62 78"

Cossacks
Freedom: 1st Resistance
Worms World Party
Deep Space 9: The Fallen
Heist
Hostile Waters
Star Trek: Away Team
Airfix: Dogfighter

*62 79"
*62 64"
*62 90"
*62 84"
*62 07"
*61 91"
*61 75"
*61 79"

GOTY2001



Some serious competition

But there was one more title in May that we thought should rate an extra mention. We first heard about it at www.oldmanmurray.com, where one of the funniest developer interviews ever made its way onto the web: "If I got this crate word, you mean vehicles. Yes we plan to have space crate in last game section where you approach Sirius city and the Mental's palace." It was a little FPS from deepest Croatia and it was called Serious Sam (PCPP#60).

Harking back to the good old days of Doom, Sam threw stupid numbers of enemies at you, gave you stupid guns to kill them with, and was generally a stupid gaming experience. But we mean that in a good way.

June brought cooler weather but sadly not that many cool games. The only GOTY-worthy title we could get our hands on for PCPP#61 was Fallout Tactics. It took the classic Fallout universe and stripped out all the roleplaying, leaving only the combat. It was an odd idea by it worked well. Some said it was

HIGHLIGHTS

Serious Sam	81%
Fallout Tactics	85%
Myst3	81%
Emperor	79%
Diablo2: LOD	90%

GOTY2001

a little too linear, or that there was only really ever one way to complete a mission and the remaining RPG elements were thus completely superfluous. And there sure as hell wasn't enough gecko-skinning.

Sadly Myst

Our esteemed editor's Birth Month of July was also thin on the ground when it came to instant classics, but the next inevitable instalment of the franchise juggernaut of Myst arrived in the form of Myst 3: Exile (PCPP#62). Starring the guy

who played the bad mentat in Dune, Myst3 was less about the obscure mechanical puzzles of Riven and more about self-contained locations and cute rats. Some media outlets pounded it into the dirt. Others sang it's praises to the high heavens. We were kind of in between. The fact that the game was created not by Cyan but by Presto Studios meant for us it was not quite an authentic

casting strange purple shadows across the dunes of... er... Dune. Of course, when you got down to it, Emperor was pretty much exactly the same game as Dune 2 and Dune 2000, which had much lower system requirements.

Unfazed by another Westwood blockbuster clogging the shelves, Blizzard unleashed their long-awaited expansion to Diablo 2. Lord of

Myst3 was less about the obscure mechanical puzzles of Riven and more about cute rats

Myst experience. Still pretty good though.

And so we began the long crawl out of winter with only a giant ape and a dune-ful of screaming headless Kamikazes for comfort. But speaking of dunes, in August Westwood broke with their 2D traditions and unleashed their first 3D RTS on the world in the form of Emperor: Yet Another Battle for Dune (PCPP#63). It sure was a pretty looking game, with variable lighting conditions

Destruction (PCPP#53) took the tried and tested formula, added two new character classes, a cuirass-load of new items and an extra chapter. Repetitively clicking the same region of your screen never played so good. To be honest, we here at PCPP have never seen the deep appeal of Diablo 2 (although rumour has it Anthony toyed with it for a time) but that hasn't stopped a legion of fans, especially in Korea.

Crime Cities
The Sims: House Party
Mission Humanity
Nicktoons Racing
Ultima Online: Third Dawn
Summoner
Jagged Alliance 2
Icewind Dale: Heart of Winter

*61 52%
*61 80%
*61 07%
*61 71%
*61 66%
*61 90%
*61 83%
*61 70%

Jetfighter 4
Fate of the Dragon
The Ward
Sudden Strike
Clive Barker's Undying
NASCAR 4
F1 Racing Championship
Age of Sail 2

*61 75%
*61 67%
*61 59%
*60 92%
*60 83%
*60 93%
*60 90%
*60 70%

Evil Islands
Kingdom Under Fire
Battle for Naboo
NBA Live 2001
Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars
Sim Coaster
Severance Blade of Darkness
Everquest Scars of Velious

*60 79%
*60 78%
*60 25%
*60 81%
*59 87%
*59 79%
*59 80%
*59 85%

Starfleet Command 2
Blair Witch: Rustin Parr
Blair Witch: Coffin Rock
Blair Witch: Elly Kedward
Pro Rally 2001
Battle of Britain
PGA Golf Titanium
Chicken Run

*59 55%
*59 85%
*59 62%
*59 74%
*59 68%
*59 90%
*59 86%
*59 69%



Captain Old School rides again

While August had its RTS and Action RPG giants, there was one game that captured the hearts and minds of the PowerPlay staffers - if not our jaded contributors. That game was Space Tripper (PCPP#63), created and distributed online by a two-man team named PomPom. Vaguely reminiscent of Defender, Space Tripper was - and

abstract, totally awesome.

We were still playing Space Tripper come September, but those of us in the office who needed more from their games than a quick twitch discovered Arcanum (PCPP#64). While reviews of this epic RPG were mixed, we liked it a lot, and the crazy sci-fi Victorian setting brought to mind such classics as the Chaos Engine by our old pals the Bitmap

Swiss army knife of shooters. Guns, trucks, tanks, planes, all were available for the player to use and the exciting Cold War scenario gave it a kind of cool eighties kitsch. Some (particularly the developers of Ghost Recon) suggested that a Special Forces soldier wouldn't necessarily be able to fire a gun, drive a tank and fly a helicopter all in the same afternoon, but did we care? We did not.

Max Pleasure

And then, like something out of a dream, Max Payne (PCPP#65) was finally released. It came suddenly, like a mysterious visitor in the night, pre-announced only by a shaky-cam video of a bunch of crazy Danes narrating their first experiences with the game, along with a lot of creative swearing in what they probably thought was English. Max was simple in execution - run and shoot, but elegant in design. A comic-book interface unravelled the story. Bullet-time made every gunfight a cinematic classic and encouraged run-and-gun tactics in a world of stealth-

based shooters. Were each of these elements a gaming revolution or a cheap way of getting an overdue product out the door? Only your vote will decide.

Commandos 2 (PCPP#67), also received mixed reviews but we loved it. A truly intelligent puzzle game in the guise of a squad-based tactical RTS. Sure, there was only one way to finish each level, and the amount of trial-and-error could make your brain leak out of your ears, but it was tight and worthy of its gold award.

John even achieved godlike status by actually finishing Space Tripper on hardest

remains - a 2D top-down shooter. Each level is small, tasty and rendered in beautiful 3D. That's right, a 2D game using a 3D engine to great effect. We spent hours in the Space Tripper Chair, progressing through Hard to Hardest, attempting the first level of the Temple of the Gods over and over. John even achieved godlike status by actually finishing the game on hardest. Space Tripper is what gaming is really about; achieving that perfect zone. Totally

Brothers. Arcanum made excellent use of skills such as Charisma, with a massive branching conversation system, so if you were too dumb people simply wouldn't speak to you. Okay, so it was rather ugly graphically and there were numerous complaints about the way the quests were structured, but Arcanum remained a shot in the arm for RPGs.

September also brought us Operation Flashpoint (PCPP#64), the

HIGHLIGHTS

Space Tripper	86 th
Arcanum	92 th
Operation Flashpoint	94 th
Max Payne	84 th
Commandos 2	91 st

GOTY2001

Oni	*58 88%	Resident Evil 3	*58 63%	Mechwarrior 4: Vengeance	*57 91%	Metal Gear Solid	*57 78%
Call to Power II	*58 78%	Kiss Pinball	*58 22%	Colin McRae Rally 2	*57 85%	Bass Avenger	*57 08%
Delta Force: Land Warrior	*58 75%	Zeus	*58 91%	Gunman Chronicles	*57 80%	Deep Fighter	*57 60%
Fur Fighters	*58 73%	Galaga	*58 64%	Project IGI	*57 86%	Pacman	*57 70%
Screamer 4x4	*58 69%	Battle Isle: Andosia War	*58 76%	B-17 2: The Mighty Eighth	*57 90%	Championship Manager 00/01	*57 90%
F1 Season 2000	*58 67%	Rainbow 6: Covert Ops	*58 69%	Stupid Invaders	*57 85%	Heroes Chronicles	*57 68%
Close Combat: Invasion	*58 85%	X-Gold	*58 65%	FIFA 2001	*57 84%	Links 2001	*57 82%
Panzer General 3	*58 72%	Sheep	*58 70%	Mercedes Benz Truck Racing	*57 55%	Tiger Woods USA Tour	*57 59%

GOTY2001



HIGHLIGHTS

Empire Earth	89%
Civilization 3	95%
Ghost Recon	92%
Battle Realms	91%
AVP2	84%

Clash of the Titans

And so 2001 drew to a close, and no one had found a giant black oblong floating in space, no one had demanded that someone else open the pod bay door, and no one proclaimed that anything was full of stars. However, what did happen was a whole bunch of awesome games landed on our doorstep for the Christmas issue. Wearing little Santa caps we gleefully doled out Empire Earth (PCPP#68) and Civilization 3 (PCPP#68).

Now, our Empire Earth review has caused some comment since some people believed we were reviewing code that didn't represent the final product. Well we got a boxed copy in and took another look at it and George's review still stands, as does our score. We don't think Empire Earth is GOTY material - there, we said it.

Civilization 3 on the other hand is definitely GOTY material. With countless

improvements, tweaks and enhancements to the original formula, both John and the inimitable James Cottee have gone absolutely spare over Sid's latest opus. Don't believe us? Flip to page 108 for James' frighteningly detailed post-mortem of this new entry into the turn-based hall of fame.

Back to the future

Even though this is the 2001 GOTY we do need to include three games from the January 2002 edition of PC PowerPlay; because of those famous vagaries of publishing, these games were actually released in the dying days of 2001.

First up, Ghost Recon (PCPP#69) brought the Rainbow Six franchise back to life by completely changing it. No more cops, no more handcuffs, just the Russian wilderness and real bullets. Ghost Recon really shone in multiplayer,

and the spotter/sniper relationship builds great friendships. Slick outdoor graphics and futuristic yet realistic weaponry made Ghost Recon the tactical shooter for the new millennium.

For something completely different, try Battle Realms (PCPP#69). In a genre tied down by rules and boring conventions, this debut from Liquid Entertainment brought a new face to RTS. A clever economic system kept the focus on the battlefield, and in face it was only possible to complete certain upgrades if your army had built up enough mojo from actual battle. Four distinctly different races and a faultless fantasy kung-fu horror design ethos helped to make Battle Realms a real sit-up-and-take-notice title. And yet, have we been playing it since? We're not going to lie to you; no. A game that takes unit balancing to a new extreme also remains essentially difficult to win. There are no grunt-rushes, even after three hours in a mission.

Finally though, there was Aliens vs Predator 2 (PCPP#69). Our feelings

about this one remain mixed.

Impeccable design and brilliant visuals couldn't make up for the rather rushed singleplayer experience. Multiplayer was good, but relied on novelty species combinations rather than real balance. Game of the Year? We'd say no, but it was still a great title.

THE CONTENDERS

So there they are, our top 25. And along the bottom of each page you will of course have noticed the other contenders; all the games reviewed in PCPP in the year 2001. It will never come again, but the games are here to stay. At least, until Microsoft releases a new operating system that refuses to play them. Choose carefully, and choose well. A whole bunch of distributors, publishers and of course developers are waiting with baited breath for your eventual decision. Let the voting begin.

A whole bunch of awesome games landed on our doorstep for the Christmas issue

Combat Flight Sim 2
Rune
Tomb Raider Chronicles
Starship Troopers
Insane
Cultures
Submarine Titans
In Cold Blood

*57 83%
*56 80%
*56 71%
*56 76%
*56 87%
*56 81%
*56 70%
*56 80%

Infestation
Carmageddon 2000
Buck & Bass 2
Professional Bull Rider 2
Combat Mission
Ultra Pinball Thrillride
Madden 2001
Star Trek: New Worlds

*56 68%
*56 40%
*56 11%
*56 36%
*56 90%
*56 71%
*56 78%
*56 35%

NOW VOTE!



READER GAME OF THE YEAR 2001



Vote NOW!

Here's your second of four chances to vote in this year's prestigious PCPP Reader Game of the Year awards. But we don't just expect you to vote out of the goodness of your heart! Every correctly filled in voting form we receive (that means 10 eligible games, a reason for your Game of the Year and, naturally, your full name and postal address) will go into the draw to win this fantastic 22" Mitsubishi monitor. It's massive! It's phat! As we said in last month's review, gaming just doesn't get any bigger, without expensive projectors and white sheets hung on the wall. And it's all thanks to the generous folks at Mitsubishi Electric Australia!



WIN THIS!

BEST GAME OF 2001

1.

Why is this the game of the year?

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

YOUR DETAILS

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

State:

Country:

HOW TO VOTE

Simply write your favourite game of 2001 in the top space and then provide a brief reason for why you believe this should be game of the year. Then fill in the rest of the positions with other worthy 2001 releases and send the whole caboodle to:

PC PowerPlay
GOTY Primaries
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PS2

PSX

PC

DREAMCAST

NINTENDO 64

XBOX

GAMECUBE

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games

In review

The most authoritative reviews around

There we were... it was late in the evening and a hush had descended about the office. Eyes darted between other sets of eyes until, inevitably all eyes dropped to the coffee table in front of us. I was nervous. So were the others. The scattered array of game boxes was luxuriously splayed as if spreading this handful out would somehow make for more pages.

Four games... seven days... Dear God, what have we done?

So it was, my madness whispering sweet nothings in my head. The faint popping of a blood vessel on Anthony's forehead was all the sound I could hear. I had a fair idea what Daniel was thinking (nana nana nana nana nana nana nana nana - BATMAN!) and I would have been thinking something like that too, of not for the madness.

But here we are at the end of an issue and sure enough, we got 13, count em 13 reviews. To say it always goes like this would be an overstatement but it seems to. There's some good stuff here too. Starfighter proved to be much better than any of us imagined and is bloody good in its own right. But SimGolf is my pick of the month. Cute, stylish and in the words of any numbers of reviewers across the globe, "with a surprising amount of depth." Lovely.

Strategy games are the meat of the reviews sandwich this month. Turn straight to page 60 should that be your particular alley of choice. From Europa Universalis (which features an old face that I'm proud to welcome back) to Waterloo, there's all shades of strategy gaming: historic, comic, plastic - we've got it all.

Returning too, is the Hall of Fame which is a summary of past reviews - or the best of them anyway. So there you go, you're up to date and primed to hit the stores or second hand stalls for that little gem to while away the night. I'll just get back to worrying about reviews if you don't mind.

John Dewhurst
johnd@next.com.au



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66	Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns
68	UEFA 2001/02
70	Army Men RTS
71	V8 Challenge
72	Flight Downunder
73	Gadget Tycoon
74	Flotsam and Jetsam

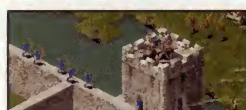
THE PCPP REVIEW SCORING SYSTEM

90+	Gold Award. A classic, everyone will love this game.
89-80	A strong title that's hard to fault. But perhaps not the best in its field.
79-60	Competent and playable. For fans of the genre.
59-40	Decidedly average, probably boring.
39-0	A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.

HALL F OF A 20 M 02 E

PC Powerplay's record of the latest and greatest returns after a good long sit in the shade. The games landscape has changed a little in the interim but there are many (not so) old favourites that remain. If it's here in our list, it's timeless gaming that needs your immediate attention. Conveniently arranged into genre, this is the perfect buyer's guide for the truly discerning and fanatic alike. Enjoy you damn maniacs.

STRATEGY



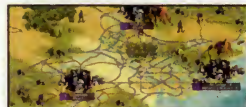
Stronghold 93% #68
Build a fortress to your majesty and treat the peasants as you wish. Unique take on resource management.



Black & White 92% #60
Conquer the world with belief by controlling villagers and a giant beast.



Commandos 2: Men of Courage 91% #67
The Commandos formula with greater flexibility, more varied scenarios and a super atmosphere.



Civilization 3 95% #68
The epic series brings new elements to turn-based battle, cultural influence, resources and convincing trade.



Empire Earth 89% #68
Ambitious RTS spanning prehistory to the present day with astonishing detail in a 3D environment.

ROLEPLAYING



Battle Realms 91% #69
Combat focussed oriental blade-swinging strategy. Four clans and an intricate campaign make the perfect brew.



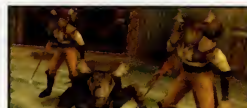
Baldur's Gate II 93% #53
Classes, skills, artifacts, and extended gameplay in purest Dungeons and Dragons adventure.



Throne of Darkness 91% #67
Diablo style hack n slash through a Japanese landscape of ghouls, magic and mountains of treasure.



Arcanum 92% #39
Genuine roleplaying and deep interaction set in a superbly inventive world. Plenty of replay value, too.



Wizardry 8 90% #70
The eighth in the classic fantasy series proves there's life in the old dog yet.

RACING



F1 Racing Championship 90% #60
The best looking and fastest of its kind. The Ferrari of Formula One sims.



Leadfoot 80% #64
Aussie boys come good in this dirt track extravaganza for the revheads.



Colin McRae 2 85% #57
Superior physics, high realism and lean design. Just the rally essentials.



GP 500 96% #43
Motorcycle Championship game in its own league. Superb racing in its own right.

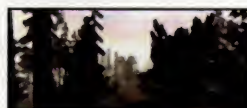


Grand Prix 3 88% #53
Third instalment of the classic F1 series with amazing AI, weather and authenticity.

ACTION



Deus Ex 98% #51
The most complete games experience ever: FPS, RPG, whatever you wish.



Ghost Recon 92% #69
Squad based shooter action calls for control, superior planning and nerves of steel.



Alien vs Predator 2 84% #69
Superb sequel that delivers the terror and variety that you expect from THE sci-fi menage a trois.



Max Payne 84% #65
The new king of grit with a screwed-up face, pockets full of bullets and all the time in the world to shoot.



Operation Flashpoint 94% #64
Incredibly atmospheric and unbearably tense, this is truly the ultimate soldier simulation. Brilliant mix of action and tactics.

READER'S TOP FIVE

My ultimate moment in a game was in Planescape: Torment when you come across that giant golem stuck in a siege tower that is sent to destroy order in the world - wow! Or maybe it's when you finally meet Ravel after hearing so much about her and coming to image her a certain way and then she turns out to be something entirely different - or maybe it's the end. Torment is truly mind blowing.

YumCha

Send your Top Five games of all-time to: imho@pcpowerplay.com.au
Don't forget to tell us why!



1. Planescape: Torment
2. Arcanum
3. Counter-Strike
4. SimCity 2000
5. Solitaire (not!)

RECENT GOLD AWARDS



Ghost Recon
92%
PCPP#69



Battle Realms
91%
PCPP#69



Allied Assault
90%
PCPP#70



Wizardry 8
90%
PCPP#70



SPORT



Tony Hawk 2 92% . #58
Perfect blend of challenge, control and excitement in this X-large sports classic.



Links Championship Edition 84% #68
Swing your clubs through the best greens on screens.



FIFA 2001 84% . #57
The closest to football reality with a bigger pitch, best defense and nicest special moves.



NBA Live 2001 81% . #60
Backboard mayhem in the finest b-ball game to date.

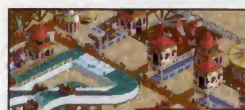


Madden 2001 78% . #56
American football with the perfect engine and all prettied up.

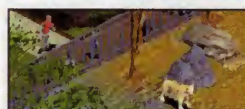
MANAGEMENT



The Sims 90% . #47
People simulation phenomenon offers complete domestic control.



RollerCoaster Tycoon 93% . #36
Maintain theme parks while building coasters, thrill rides and toilets



Zoo Tycoon 81% #69
Microsoft manage to convert a conservation pamphlet into a diverting theme park game.



Zeus 91% . #58
Reign in terror or glory over your little Greek worshippers



Championship Manager 00/01 90% . #57
Authentic soccer mayhem from the sidelines

FLIGHT SIM



IL2 Sturmovik 92% #69
The little tank of the Russian skies blows holes in the competition.



I-War 2 85% . #63
Sequel of the highest quality that sets new standards for space sims



Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002 90% #69
The finest commercial flying now with controversy surgically removed.



Freespace 2 95% . #44
Gorgeous visuals, stunning story, superb space battle action.

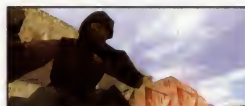


Jane's FA /18 91% . #37
High class, accessible, realistic top quality flight sim is the business

ONLINE



Tribes 2 93% . #60
The finest cooperative combat experience in the firstperson



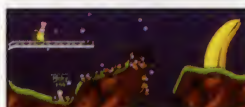
Counter-Strike 91% . #55
Half Life and team-based battle are the quintessential online experience



Quake 3 93% . #45
Slickest, simplest, most user-friendly deathmatch experience bar none



Anarchy Online 86% #68
Shaved heads, ATMs and missions are the potent brew that makes this an online event.



Worms: World Party 90% . #62
Premiere online puzzle strategy game. Command tiny worms with giant weapons

Star Wars: Starfighter

Show me your Han Solo and I'll show you my... (Chewbacca? - Ed)

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Secret Level

PUBLISHER

Lucasarts

DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

PRICE

\$89.95

RATING

G8+

AVAILABLE

Now



SYSTEM

NEED

Win9x/Me/2K/XP,
PIII-500, 64MB
RAM, 32MB sound
card, 700MB HDD

WANT

Let your
imagination run
wild!

Like a fine, pert young dancing popster, *Starfighter* is about the razzle, the dazzle and the excitement of the moment. This space action shooter is a veritable trevor trove of loving attention to *Star Wars* detail: the drama, the ducking and weaving, the showers of blaster fire and last minute rescues. Driven by the feeling, it's simple, highly accessible fun. *Starfighter*, thy name is Britney.

Oops... I did it again

This is the kind of game that Lucasarts was trying to make two years ago, a game that trades on the thrills of *Star Wars* by recreating those sensations in a very authentic and accessible way - realistic enough for the maniacally fanatical and visceral enough to draw the occasional player. This is clearly the aim with all licensed product but it's something that most game franchises often miss and that some have yet to achieve (dare I say *Star Trek*). A couple of years down the track and it seems Secret Level have matched the game proper with Lucasarts' ever impressive cutscene movies and options screens. It's all stunningly created, from the twisting canyons of the training mission to the molten surface of a distant planet, from the deep space asteroid belts to the vast planet surface of Naboo in which the major battle of

The Phantom Menace takes place.

When Three become One

The *Starfighter* adventure is set in the *Star Wars* Episode One story and involves three heroes Rhys Dallows, Vana Sage and Nym whose stories gradually converge in the war against the Trade Federation. As in most action games, that's all you need to know. The story is neither impressive nor annoying, it's simply a nice break between missions. No characters

starfighter, and the flying tank that is the Havoc. The craft range from light to heavy classes but the variety in weaponry and shift in control is slight. Rhys' Naboo Starfighter sees a lot of action and features a limited stock of proton torpedoes. Vana's Mantis is quicker than the other two and features a tagging option for nano missiles to track enemy ships. Finally the Havoc is the bomb, so to speak, as it features regenerating energy bombs and a

"A grunty setup is almost mandatory in allowing this baby light globe to shine."

from the films get a look in but a relative of Watto makes an appearance which is jolly good rib-tickling fun. That said, the cutscene movies are some of the best stuff I've seen since *Shrek*. No kidding, this is damn impressive CG animation.

The visual feast on offer in *Starfighter* will suck the masses in but the strong element that will keep everyone entertained (that means you) is the flight system. Through the course of the game, the player will take the controls of three different vehicles: the speedy nimble Guardian Mantis, the retro-fitted Naboo

nifty bombing reticle when on a planet surface. Of course, this model chugs to say the least.

Hit me Baby...

Missions come in the usual shapes and sizes, from protecting the mothership to chasing down Trade Federation fighters and the ever-present solo missions. There's a fair amount of variety but there could definitely have been some more creative levels. I like a good pursuit or versus-the-clock mission - these are not on display here. There's



A bustling Trade Federation riverina

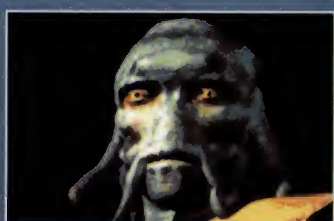


Targetting computers let me shoot you



Galactic (Yeah? Galactic what? - Ed)

STARRING SOME GUY YOU NEVER HEARD OF



In the fine tradition of Kyle Katarn and Dash Rendar (who...? - Ed), *Starfighter* is launching the careers of a bunch of new faces. And this rag-tag bunch verge on the almost memorable. There's a liberated young woman named Vana, a Han Solo look alike named Rhys Dallows and a squid faced pirate named Nym. The less memorable the better we say. Then it's easier to imagine oneself as the hero of choice: Han Solo, Luke or Anakin if you're a young tacker. This works for the obsessives as well, who can imagine they are Lando, Wedge, Amidala's chamber maid or Boba Fett's codpiece.

probably enough variety in enemies and crafts to make up for this.

Control is simplicity itself with a mandatory gamepad. The analog stick directs the craft and one command returns the ship upright should it turn upside down amidst all the dogfighting

- which it inevitably will. Then there are the various other commands to assign to the 30 or so other buttons to be found on the average gamepad: two fire buttons, turbo boost, brakes, targeting systems as well as wingmen commands, which help to elevate the game beyond a lonely shoot-em-up. The result is a control system intricate enough to challenge but not as baffling as it might seem.

...One more Time

The standard issue Lucasarts template of mission objectives is again on display with bronze, silver and gold medals being awarded for bonus objectives. These in turn unlock secret levels. The superhuman feats required, especially the bastardly time limits, will add hours to the game and remove up to 25% of your hair. The three difficulty settings similarly aim to extend the game life. The sound is impressive with the constant radio chatter of your ally stooges and commanders creating high drama with phrases like, "Protect the hull! It's almost breached!" and "Bring down that particular vessel, we're running out of time..." Together with the film score perfect soundtrack, *Starfighter* is a wondrous earful.

Much like *Medal of Honor* last month, *Star Wars Starfighter* is about the game rather than the depth. There's enough in the sound, the

battle and the cutscenes to entertain but all else is streamlined for easy consumption. The training mission is a good start for the story but is definitely optional for the capable gamer.

You're purdy

It's worth noting that a grunty setup is almost mandatory in allowing this baby light globe to shine. Any game that relies so much on looks needs the full treatment. This truly awesome monitor that we have in the office would probably make a pile of smelly droppings look like Nigella Lawson dumplings (oooh... how exotic...-Ed). Lesser set-ups (like my humble home PC), are obviously injected with less "wow" drugs at birth and accordingly the game suffers. Do I credit this experience to hardware? Well, no but if you're running something less than a PIII, don't expect a challenging narrative to make up for your crappy system.

In the final assessment, this is a simple action game that looks and sounds golden. Like Britney who can dazzle 100,000 in a football arena, this is high octane fun and, if you look at it the right way, entirely suitable for the kids or kids at heart. *Starfighter* is amazingly fun for all but the ardent Scrooges of the world. Everyone likes to drool a little sometimes.

John Dewhurst

RATING

FOR

- Authentic atmosphere
- Good challenge
- Quality PC space action shooter

AGAINST

- No multiplayer options
- Simplistic mission structure
- "New" Star Wars characters

OVERALL

Strong action gaming that's pretty, fast and furious.

80

Sid Meier's SimGolf

Our hero tells us about eponymous holes in one

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Firaxis

PUBLISHER

EA Games

DISTRIBUTOR

EA Games

PRICE

\$69.95

RATING

G8+

AVAILABLE

Now



SYSTEM

NEED

Win 9x/2K/Me/XP, PII-300, 64MB RAM, high color capable 8MB video card

WANT

PIII-800, 128MB RAM, GeForce MX 2

Like nurses, mothers and deputy editors the world over, Sim fans are there to take care of others. Of course, this can occasionally involve doing unpleasant things but higher causes are a calling not a choice. Most gamers prefer the cut and thrust, shotgun, flak jackets and the glory of a final boss. Not me: more food, more soda, higher prices, more amusements. Your leisure is my pleasure. With this in mind, I donned some stupid shorts and stupider right wing politics to pleasure a golf course.

When you enter The Sims or SimCity or any tycoon game, there is the palpable sense of need. I NEED more money, I NEED to feed the tigers, I NEED to try to not kill my Sims. Ooh, and they NEED me too, yes little old me. Which is fine for the compulsive but also fine for the bleeding heart socialist. My socialist tendencies had to adjourn to the back patio for a while then as I tended to the NEEDS of the members of a golf club.

Each according to his ability

Part of looking after other people is making sure they're happy enough they want to pay for it - whatever IT happens to be. And there's so much to pay for. From the sweeping fairways and maintenance to the perky

flowers, greenkeeping fees and the prestige, of course, the man with a bulging pocket (you mean wallet - Ed.) has to pay. And the execs, pros and usurpers to the garden set are more than happy to do so.

At first round, Sid Meier's SimGolf plays simply as a Theme Park affair. It calls for the arrangement of good golf courses to thrill and inspire the patrons to empty their wallets into your coffers. Build a nice course, and your little Sims say things such as "what a jolly good course" or "I'm bringing Rodney next time."

make the park work. To make money you gotta spend money after all. Through judicious placement of drink stalls and such, the manager-cum-golf-pro slowly begins to recoup some funds.

Geeeeeeenius....

Now Sid Meier isn't the object of so much constant reference without good reason. Drawing from the wisdom of player interaction (riding rides, etc.), Meier draws the logical conclusion by letting players take to their own courses and play rounds themselves. This is an

"Meier draws the logical conclusion by letting players take to their own courses and play rounds themselves"

Each according to his debt

Interestingly, SimGolf allows the player a bottomless credit account, making the business of installing practise greens, driving ranges and airports a breeze. The catch is that you, aspiring golf pro and manager, must report to the golf club board if you don't turn a profit.

If you fail to get out of the red, your course will be taken from you - for shame! It's a better system than in other games where you wait to earn a few measly dollars to finish a stretch of track or a path. The onus is on the manager to

example of design genius as it serves a couple of purposes. Firstly, it alleviates the boredom that accompanies the dips in these management-style games - when something big has just been finished and you've no money. Secondly, the strengths of your golf pro's game can be upgraded as Joe Putter (or whatever his name is) progresses.

More than a simple diversionary Windows game, playing rounds of golf is a strong part of the whole. There's a limited amount of control



TELL ME A STORY

As your park goes about its business, occasionally a pair of golfers will come along and begin a story. Their conversation reflects their game, their feelings for each other and their surroundings. Another means to draw the player in, the adorable nonsense that springs forth is pure gold.



over proceedings on offer but just enough to keep the games quick and exciting. Up to five style of shots can be selected and then the chosen length of the shot. The rest is up to chance and skill. As tricky shots are made, abilities are earned. Conversely, make a terrible

shot and the player's confidence plummets.

Uterior motives

While I could happily play this kind of golf for hours as it's infinitely easier and more engaging than bona fide golf games (the deputy's opinions do not reflect those of the - Ed.), I'm sure Sid would say something more. Descending from heaven, on a glistening cloud the words would appear inside your very head: "The principle aim of allowing the players to try out their own courses is to critically appraise them and hence improve them. And hence improve the universe. Shalom." Then he'd disappear into the ether.

Of course, Sid has a point. The minute you step up to your par 5 with as many doglegs and more rough than fairway, you begin to reconsider the whole thing. Longer holes aren't better than short holes ("snigger"), the same goes for difficult ones. Your course is judged as a range of holes, so some variety is called for. An exciting course for you is likely to be an entertaining course for other golfers. Each course should satisfy everyone who steps to the tee.

Insert SimSpeak babel fish now

The vast majority of visitors are average weekend golfer Sims. They speak in Simlish, they have NEEDS, they get annoyed, they fall in

love, they speak nonsense, they die in kitchen fires, the usual stuff. The personality your patrons add is a big part of the fun of SimGolf.

However it's the pro golfers who come to the course that are of especial interest. The higher profile players will challenge your resident pro for cash prizes which draws attention to the course, which lures more patrons, which draws more money from the public and from sponsors, which allows expansion and the wheel goes ever on...

Everything is Everything is Everything

Sid Meier's SimGolf is a triumph because there's always something to do and everything's relevant to the other pursuits. While you are free to focus on maintaining a good resort and happy customers, or making the best courses in the country, or constructing the finest SimGolfer on the planet, there's always the opportunity to turn around and do a little of something else in the game.

As the dough begins to roll in, there are other parks across the land to buy and to mould and bend to one's moneymaking desires. Because like nurses, mothers and deputy editors everywhere, it is the control - nay, the power! - that sates us. Step forward domestic powermongers, SimGolf is your new elixir.

John Dewhurst

RATING

FOR

- High and funky personality
- Good variety in gameplay
- Strong all-round sim

AGAINST

- I'm thinking...
- Golf play stylised
- It's only a game

OVERALL

Perfect mix of management, design and no pressure play. Superb.

86

Trainz

When gaming on rails is a good thing

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Auran

PUBLISHER

Strategy First

DISTRIBUTOR

Ozisoft

PRICE

\$79.95

RATING

G

AVAILABLE

Now



And now! I will destroy the city! BWAHAHA!



And now! I will destroy the country! BWAHAHA!



Hasn't he got a shiny nose?



In the HOT seat of HOT ACTION!

SYSTEM

NEED

P3 450

128Mb RAM

GeForce2 MX

500Mb HDD

WANT

Athlon XP 1500+

512Mb RAM

GeForce3 Ti500

1Gb HDD

Now here's an unusual product. The first time you launch Trainz you'll find yourself thinking "is this actually a game, in the traditional sense?" There is no story. There are no objectives. It's just you and a bunch of trains.

There are a couple of reasons for this; first is that Trainz is a virtual model railroading simulator. The pleasure is not supposed to come from defeating an opponent's trains while you upgrade your own trains into lethal killing machines, the pleasure comes from building attractive layouts, assembling a bunch of groovy trains and then sending them around those layouts. It's what we affectionately call a 'train nut thing'.

The second reason Trainz appears to be a computer program without a game attached is that Auran from the word go has designed the application to be modular. Further down the track (that's one) Auran will release extra packs for the game which will add various elements to the mix. Eventually Trainz will be able to do everything that Railroad Tycoon did, and combine it with visuals that are superior to Microsoft's Train Simulator.

Trainspotting

Okay so, point one, will you actually enjoy

Trainz if you're not into trains? While this may seem a fairly obvious question, Trainz more than most games depends on its market being actually interested in its content. While SimGolf may attract non-golfers, Trainz at first seems to offer little to those outside the train enthusiast fraternity.

The game is split into three sections. The first, named My Collection, will be of little more than passing interest to anyone not obsessed with locomotion. My Collection displays a 3D realtime render of each rail item in the game, inside a shed. So you can take a really close look at everything from an Intercity 125 to flat cars. That's right, see a flat

choosing a locomotive and then a bunch of carriages. As any train nut will tell you, this is called a Consist. Building a Consist is simplicity itself; just drag items from a list onto a sort of shelf at the bottom of the screen. Each object is pictured when you select it, so it's easy to get a good idea of what your train is going to look like.

Auran has been rather generous here, as there are rather more than 30 objects, including a good selection of diesel and electric locomotives. A decision was made early in the design process to not use steam at this stage.

Unlike Microsoft Train Simulator (MSTS) it's possible to have more than one train on a layout at a time. If the layout (or track) you're

"Trainz appears to be a computer program without a game attached"

car from every angle. To be fair, the quality of the 3D models is nothing short of exemplary, with everything down to the window wipers replicated in train-nut-worthily anal detail. However, besides looking pretty this section doesn't really do anything.

More to the average gamer's taste is the Driver section. Here, you can construct a train by

using has enough start points, it's possible to place as many trains as your CPU can handle.

Once two or three consists have been built, it's time to choose a layout. Here, Auran has unfortunately not been very generous, with only three layouts included out of the box; a massive US scenario, a fairly large British area and a medium-sized Aussie layout.



Here's a train I spotted earlier



Bridge over the river Nerd



Choofety choof choof choof!

SYSTEM HUNGRY

Auran made a big deal of the scalable system requirements for Trainz. However, as it turns out what the developer must have meant is that Trainz will expand to use the resources of future systems. As for today, well anything less than a GeForce2 MX will see a very chuggy locomotive indeed (that's three). The game does require a fairly beefy system to get minimum acceptable framerate, and this is odd because Trainz seems suited to the type of user who may not have upgraded their PC since 1994.

The game then launches very quickly into driver mode, with the whole layout created around the train in very impressive detail. Ground textures are varied, the number of trackside objects is high, and even the clouds are animated.

Thomas rides again

Control of each consist (or train) is as simple as if Trainz were a real model railroad. A DCC control system on the side of the screen allows you to set forward or reverse throttle and switch from chase to internal and even preset trackside camera views.

Inside the locomotive the cabin is rendered

in 3D and looks a lot more attractive than the cabins of MSTs. However, there seems to be only two generic cabins; one for electric trains and one for diesel, although the afore mentioned Intercity 125 does have a swanky hi-tech cabin of its own.

Once the train is moving, it's possible to move and zoom the camera while holding down the right mouse button, and this level of simplicity is carried throughout the game. To change a point, simply click on the little arrows floating over the switch and your train will be diverted onto a new track.

And that's about it for Driver. Send your trains around the tracks. If you have more than one consist you can switch between them and get that tiny thrill of model railroading pleasure as they pass each other by on opposite rails (I'm confessing a lot here, aren't I?). But beyond cruising around the layout, there's not a hell of a lot else to do. A free-roaming camera would have been welcome, so you could take a tour of the trackside flour mills and industrial buildings, or even follow the cars on their own automated journeys down the numerous roads.

Be creative

Where Trainz shines is in Surveyor mode. Here, a simple and elegant interface allows you

almost unlimited license to create new layouts. Textures, objects and rail can all be combined on the same layout, so objects from the UK, US and Australian tilesets can all be used at once. Surveyor caters for environments from open countryside to the coast to snow-capped mountains and city highrise. Auran's stroke of genius in creating Surveyor was to have a dedicated design team to work on the interface. So rather than an over-complicated development tool, Surveyor is every bit as simple to use as Driver. Navigate with the right mouse button, place objects with the left. Positioning rail and roads is so simple it's fun; the game uses 'flexitrack' whereby the rail is split into 'splines' that bend to fit the contours of your layout. Save your layout and then jump straight into Driver; no compiling, no rendering, no fuss.

Cityrail apologises for the delay

The bottom line is that yes, Trainz is a good idea without much of a game attached. For anyone not obsessed with model railroading, the game is going to run out of steam (that's two) for you very quickly. However, Surveyor is undeniably a lot of fun to play around with. As they said in St Louis, it's like Sim City without having to worry about the budget!

Anthony Fordham

RATING

FOR

- Excellent game engine
- Simple interface
- Detailed graphics

AGAINST

- Where's the game?
- High system requirements
- Limited camera control

OVERALL

No game yet, but the foundation is solid so look out for the addons

81

Waterloo

Napoleon's last Battle (not the ABBA song)

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

BreakAway Games

PUBLISHER

Strategy First

DISTRIBUTOR

GameNation

PRICE

\$79.95

RATING

M15+

AVAILABLE

Now



What we need are Elephants



Let's all roll down the hill!



Uh... yeah. Go long?



Look at all those smokers, disgusting!

SYSTEM

NEED

Win 9x/2000/Me
266 Mhz or higher;
64 MB RAM;
2X CD-ROM drive;
16 bit Graphics
card; 200 MB space

WANT

Win 9x/2000/Me
500 Mhz or higher;
128 MB RAM;
8X CD-ROM drive;
32 bit Graphics
card; 500 MB space

As anyone who took 2 Unit Modern History in school will tell you, The French Revolution and its aftermath, the bloody empire of Napoleon Bonaparte, herald the beginning of the era we consider Modern History. In an attempt to maintain stability at home and to satisfy his own ambitions of conquest, Napoleon fought wars throughout Europe and beyond its boundaries for almost all of his 11 odd years as Emperor. After a catastrophic defeat in Russia, Napoleon was forced back to France with his armies, where a coalition of British and German forces assaulted Paris, taking the city on 31 March 1814. Napoleon was exiled and the French Monarchy restored.

Born in Corsica

Nevertheless, Napoleon plotted his return to France and a year later he marched into Paris to overwhelming popular support. Reassembling his armies, Napoleon once again set out to face his enemies, a move which culminated in the battle of Waterloo on the 18th of June 1815. Although the battle was evenly matched early in the day, the combination of English and Prussian forces soundly smacked the short mans' bottom by the end of it, thus ending once and for all Napoleon's claims to France and his influence over Europe.

For French pride!

In Waterloo: Napoleon's Last Battle, players have the opportunity to recreate this historic battle. Choosing to play either the French or Allied forces, the player commands Cavalry, Infantry and Artillery forces on a number of battlefields, attempting to outmanoeuvre the opposition and take control of strategic victory areas (planting your flag on top of the hill, so to speak). With determination and some luck, you can rout the enemy's army and send them packing.

With a bit of practice in the tutorials, gameplay in Waterloo is easy to get a handle on. Your army is broken down by Rank; an Army is made up of Divisions, which consist of several

infantry units) can be instructed to follow him. To enable flanking and envelopment type manoeuvres, each unit can be shifted or ordered into combat separately. This way, you can create massive troop movements and positional fine-tuning quite easily.

Shields at the ready

To best simulate the Battle of Waterloo, Breakaway games conducted exhaustive research into military strategy, equipment and tactics. They have employed this research admirably in the game. Before you start winning in Waterloo, you have to determine what it is that creates a victory, as most battlefields are truly level playing fields.

"The player commands Cavalry, Infantry and Artillery forces on a number of battlefields..."

Brigades. In turn, Brigades are made up of several individual units.

As Army commander, you can order a Division commander to move somewhere and all the Brigades under his command can then be instructed to follow him. Likewise, you can move a Brigade commander and his Brigade (usually consisting of about 2 or 3 cavalry units or 4 to 6

A vast number of factors have been rather cleverly incorporated into the game to enhance the tactical nature of the battles. Infantry and Cavalry units have different values for attack strength, rate of movement and morale depending on their unit type, weaponry and their experience level. In addition, each formation has widely differing purposes: square formation braces your infantry against charging



Somebody killed the horsies! Oh the humanity!



I'm confused

Allies		French	
5744		7701	
Gains	Losses	Gains	Losses
Points For Enemy Casualties 4545	Points Spent On Reinforcements 0	Points For Enemy Casualties 4760	Points Spent On Reinforcements 0
Enemy Demoralization Bonus 0		Enemy Demoralization Bonus 720	
Points For Enemy Morale Loss 1199		Points For Enemy Morale Loss 1621	
Total Points For Controlled Sites 0		Total Points For Controlled Sites 600	
Total 5744		Total 7701	

Mmmn... the French



Capture the flag Brownies style - EVERYONE gets a flag

WHY DID NAPOLEON LOSE?



On the field of battle at Waterloo, Napoleon's chance at success was to smash the numerically inferior British forces quickly, before the Prussians arrived to reinforce them. Despite the necessity of a rapid attack, Napoleon waited until 1130 hours to order his forces forward. When he did attack, it was with a massive frontal charge of cavalry against a well-defended British position, unsupported by any infantry musketeers. This futile gesture crippled Napoleons cavalry, and allowed the British to easily defend their position against his infantry forces until the Prussians arrived at Waterloo in the late afternoon.

cavalry, but is vulnerable to fire from other infantry. Positioning of troops also adds to potential victory. Friendly support to the side or rear of a unit adds to its morale, as do the close proximity of a Brigade, Division or Army

commander. Infantry with rifles can fire further than infantry with muskets. Different types of terrain offer morale bonuses to troops that occupy it and so on.

To the battlefield!

This amounts to a highly tactical game of toy soldiers that is surprisingly enjoyable to play. Scenarios within the game come in three different types, fictional, historical and speculative. Fictional battles pitch army against army in imaginary circumstances. Historical battles are generally 'snapshots' of the Waterloo battlefield, a zoomed-in section of that battle consisting of the particular Divisions of troops that fought there, down to the inclusion of reinforcements as they arrived, by the tick of the clock, on the battlefield. Speculative battles are a series of 'what if?' scenarios that allow you to explore a variety of circumstantial possibilities - for example, what if the Battle of Waterloo had started earlier in the day, or what if the Allies employed more Heavy Cavalry.

Finally, you have the Battle of Waterloo itself. Detailed down to the last... detail, this massive gunfight links up several of the historical scenarios in the game into one massive battle, re-enacting the conflict in its entirety. If nothing else, it impresses upon the player just how monumental the battle must have been. Scores

of Brigades containing literally hundreds of units fight in this confrontation. On 'Normal' game speed, you can expect this ambitious undertaking to take you the same amount of time to win as it did for Napoleon to lose: approximately nine and a half hours.

Napoleon loses - but wins

The game is a historically based re-enactment, so Waterloo has done away with the stressful, tiresome task of building bases and churning out troops. As a result, it's not limited to the 'who builds the grunts the fastest' factor that dominates so many real time strategies.

For all its merits, Waterloo is hardly a game that will re-define computer gaming. The landscape is two-dimensional and the camera view is fixed in the isometric perspective. The graphics, while well detailed from a historical perspective, are less than inspiring in terms of their realism. However, if you appreciate a good tactical game, Waterloo is definitely worth a look. You needn't be a compulsive war gamer or an RTS fanatic to while away many enjoyable hours playing this one. If you are a fan of strategic war games, call in sick, because Waterloo will take more than a small chunk of your leisure time from you.

Jace Cheal

RATING

FOR

- Excellent tactical gameplay
- Exhaustive attention to detail
- Awesome French accents

AGAINST

- Uninspiring landscapes
- Uninspiring unit animations
- Lack of camera control

OVERALL

Authentic Tactical Warfare without the polish of other games

80

S.W.I.N.E.

Just try not to make a pig of yourself

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Stormregion
PUBLISHER
Fishtank
DISTRIBUTOR
Red Ant
PRICE
\$89.95
RATING
M 15+
AVAILABLE
Now



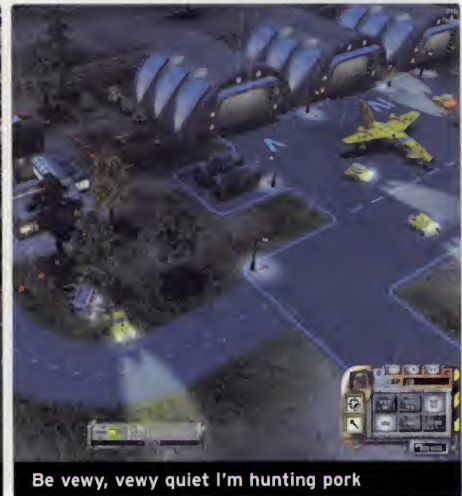
One pig...



Two pig...



Rabbit char grilled



Be vewy, vewy quiet I'm hunting pork

SYSTEM

NEED

Duron 800
128Mb RAM
GeForce2 MX
500Mb HDD

WANT

Athlon XP 1500+
256Mb RAM
GeForce3 Ti200
750Mb HDD

The time has come to polish your pork swords and take aim with your ham cannons (Oh Gawd - Ed). A new RTS has hit the PC scene like a blockbuster, and soon all good little gamers will be making bacon with only their mute home computers as witness. **SWINE** players can take either side in a WWII-like conflict between anthropomorphic nations of pigs and rabbits, with carrots, swill and glory as the prize. **SWINE** pushes the limits of what we expect from graphical performance in real time strategy, while also making a stab at more original, more realistic game mechanics.

First off the bat, the graphics are lush. The textures on the ground all blend together in a smooth and organic fashion, even exceeding *Empire Earth* in their level of detail. All the buildings are great too, but the real stars are the vehicles. Each is a finely crafted bit of gear with its own personality, made up of curving surfaces and patriotic bitmaps. Squinting at your ant-like troops is a thing of the past.

What's up Doc?

On a given level, your objective must be met with finite resources. At the briefing screen, you'll have a number of Strategic Points to spend on units of different kinds, each with their own performance and special abilities.

Tanks can burrow in the ground to resist enemy fire, command cars can call in air strikes, and so forth. Units can also be given extra attributes, like extra armour, or mine detection skills. Finally, points left over can be spent during the mission on air strikes, or buying new units to be shipped in by helicopter.

Getting the right mix is vital, obviously, but also very rewarding. Nothing beats the thrill of hammering away at helpless enemy units with artillery pieces stationed blocks away. The smaller number of units on screen certainly adds to the emotional investment placed in them, but there are also physical needs to be met. With the exception of the nuclear powered units, each can quite easily run out of gas, and an understanding of the importance of supply is well advised (see boxout).

"Nothing beats the thrill of hammering away at helpless enemy units with artillery pieces stationed blocks away."

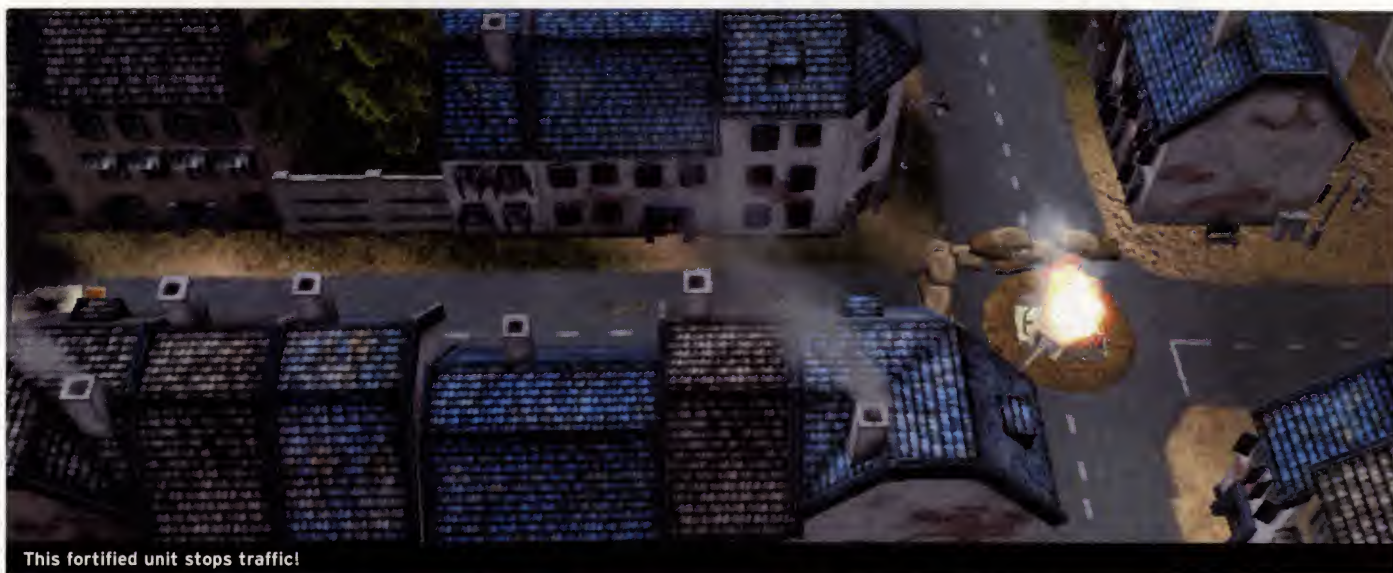
Animal Farm

The presence of the tow truck unit adds another element of complexity to the game, borne of the way units refuse to rapidly decompose after death. If all is going well, you should leave a trail of burnt-out enemy shells on the field of battle. Being a sensible, tactical

player, you will be keeping your units relatively close together, with the tanks up front, your rocket artillery close behind, and your howitzers in the back. This delicate dance of mobile units is oft made impractical by the presence of burnt-out enemy husks, so you'll want to use those tow trucks to move any smoking hulks out of the way. And since you'll be saving your allotment of precious strategic points for fighting units, chances are that's going to be a tow truck, singular.

Nothing like a bit of traffic management to up the tension. Then there's the way your units move, with the realism not ending at the little antennae and headlights. Oh no, they also have to do a certain amount of backing up, turning at slow speeds, backing up some more, turning, stopping, backing up just a liliitle

further, then taking the long way around and getting blasted by enemy units that were out of your line of sight. The way the game mechanics are balanced, you don't want to be losing any units at all, so carefully marshalling your forces is doubly important.



This fortified unit stops traffic



Piggy in the middle?



Invisible enemies attack

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Supply is crucial, and in *SWINE*, supply means trailers. They come in three flavours: fuel, ammo and repair. Each trailer has a radius of influence, and vehicles can only benefit from their replenishing goodness whilst in this circle. Trailers can't move under their own power, and need tow trucks to haul them about. Thus keeping your supply levels topped up means a certain amount of logistical micro-management. Trailers must be continuously brought up to the front, and combative units must dart back and forth to keep in tip-top shape. This is a little more realistic than the accepted RTS notion of infinite ammo appearing out of thin air. It also adds a striking and entertaining animation to the re-supply process, as little animated things fly in a graceful arc from the trailer to the selected unit. If repairs are under way, little cogs go sailing into the healing vehicle. If it's ammo, then it's little flying shells, and if it's fuel, then it's little globs of black gold making a little petrochemical rainbow. *SWINE* shatters the cargo-cult mentality of the crate-dependant gaming paradigm, forcing the player to take responsibility for their own supplies, and thus, their own destiny. It's very Nietzsche.

That'll do Pig

There are two large single player campaigns included in *SWINE*, with 15 missions for the rabbits, and 15 missions for the pigs. Each requires a methodical approach, careful exploration, and a level head. Not even counting the variable difficulty levels, that's around 30 hours of gameplay right there. Multi-player options exist, thanks to good ol' Gamespy, but it's difficult to imagine this being anyone's primary use of the game. For rush tactics, or games that take less than 15 minutes, there are better options out there. It's more likely that one would devise fiendish new levels and swap them with one's friends, rather than challenge anyone to a duel in the RTS equivalent of trench warfare.

SWINE offers a solid single player game at the expense of multi-player, but that's nothing to be ashamed of in a game where the implementation is unique. The polished game engine goes beyond graphics into the sound effects and animations for all your little drivers and pilots. There are bonus in-jokes mixed in with the generic Euro-trash talk - "You are a little short for a storm trooper, no?" If you can't stand to see computer generated talking heads hamming it up, either or both can be disabled, but they do offer reasonably inoffensive feedback to key game events.

This rare intersection of game styles makes for a great insight into where RTS games are headed. *SWINE* parlays an acceptable balance between realism and arcade action, with amazingly detailed graphics. The biggest thing that stands between the potential purchaser is not longevity, or depth, or even originality, but raw processing power. Any machine bought in the 20th century will really show its age running *SWINE*, and while it'll run in bare bones mode on a TNT2, those GeForce 3s are looking better every day. Games are finally pushing video cards out the door, and *SWINE* is in the vanguard.

James Cottee



RATING

FOR

- Highly detailed
- Great singleplayer action
- Great tactical depth

AGAINST

- High system requirements
- Micro-management
- Outrageous accents

OVERALL

Daring, unique, and fun, *SWINE* brings home the bacon.

88

Europa Universalis

1492-1792 is three hundred years of terrible war

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Paradox Studio

PUBLISHER

Infogrames

DISTRIBUTOR

GameNation

PRICE

\$79.95

RATING

G 8+

AVAILABLE

Now



SYSTEM

NEED

P200,
64MB RAM,
2MB Video card,
180MB HD.

WANT

PII300,
128MB RAM,
2MB Video card,
220MB HD.

Europa Universalis (EU) is an intriguing strategy game - it aims for historic detail and accuracy over a wide timeframe by focussing on successive major historical events in real time. To mixed results: Europa Universalis - beginning with the Renaissance of the 16th century and ending with the dawn of the 19th century - is a promising, educational, challenging, and most of all, ruddy difficult strategy experience.

Use Risk skills now

Comparisons to Civilization have been made and these have their place: EU asks that you take the role as head of a major power seeking to make its mark in the world through expansion and progress. Using co-operative, diplomatic means or by flexing your nation's less ambitious military muscle (and oftentimes, both), players extend their influence throughout the world, piece by piece. Players must also pay careful attention to the homefront (the economy in particular) lest the foundations of their efforts crumble to dust. Both games demand a great deal of management and EU is no exception.

However that's where the similarities to Civ end. EU focuses on Europe during the Renaissance, and uses a fixed playing field - a

map of the world. Also, the scale of expansion is significantly smaller than Civ's (where it's quite conceivable to blanket the entire world with your power), encouraging the player instead to make cautious and calculated attempts at gaining ground. This is perhaps EU's defining characteristic - it's soul, so to speak. While EU technically allows an attempt of mass colonisation of the whole world, it is high on impossible to pull off and is not what the game's all about. Firstly, the economy simply doesn't allow the accumulation of such a mammoth amount of resources. Secondly, EU's diplomacy system works such that if other nations consider you a major threat to their stability, alliances will be made to quickly put a

stop to your destructive potential. Megalomaniacal desires may be at the heart of your operations, however you are steered away from this as a pro-active passenger on a journey through the major cultural events of the period, learning to master the political situations and use them to your advantage. With scores of other nations and provinces also

Detail craves attention

out to get their slice of the action, merely surviving with your initial borders intact can be a considerable achievement. The attention to accuracy and detail of the period also affects how EU's culture and technology progresses. Historic and cultural milestones occur pretty much as they did in the real world, in real time, with very specific effects on the game. For example, not until the year of 1517 (when Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses on the door of a church in Germany) will you be able to shift the official religion of your nation (religion affects not only internal stability but your standing with other nations in the area).

"While EU allows an attempt of mass colonisation of the world, it really misses what the game's all about"

Also, your choice of nationality dictates what sort of conditions and limitations you will encounter throughout your campaign. Europa Universalis is not turn-based, which is initially surprising when you consider the depth of the economic and diplomacy models. Time passes ever so steadily (there are five time settings, the slowest being 1 month per real minute to 12 months per real minute) in the

Also, your choice of nationality dictates what sort of conditions and limitations you will encounter throughout your campaign.

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Well at least our borders are clearly defined...

VICTORY!



While there are a number of different short scenarios with specific mission objectives in the game, Europa Universalis is really about "The Grand Campaign". This campaign is the game's namesake and a real test of your knowledge of the game's mechanics - it takes you through three-hundred years of (post) Renaissance history!



Another mighty victory for Beige!



The red, red fields of England

SCORE!



Europa Universalis is a game won on points that are awarded and deducted for a number of game events. These include political stability, size of population, number of provinces, performance in battle and researching new technologies.

background of your operations, providing just enough urgency to prevent the game moving at a snail's pace. Thankfully, you can access your provincial economic and diplomatic sub-screens and adjust them accordingly while the game is paused. Without this ability, EU would have been

rendered nearly unplayable given the fantastic pace at which events occur. Another handy feature of the game is the ability to set the game to pause whenever a notification window pops up - as these usually accompany a significant event in the game, an automatic pause gives you the breathing room necessary especially in the later stages of the game.

Combat itself is straightforward and reflects the flavour of battle during the period. As units were all land-based, mobilising armies takes much time and co-ordination on the player's behalf to mount a successful campaign. Military units also suffer from attrition and are susceptible to the effects of being far from lines of supply - which again forces the player to avoid brutal Attila-the-Hun-style shenanigans. Diplomatic alliances can be far more fruitful than outright military dominance.

There's a game in there somewhere...

Europa Universalis is an ambitious title, and it does succeed in providing some exceptional gaming. Its focus on Renaissance Europe provides a welcome dimension to the direction of your conquests, and dare I say it, you may even learn something about the period as a result.

Clearly, a MONUMENTAL amount of effort went into building Europa Universalis, but

that's just about where the effort stopped.

While there are plenty of pop-ups in the game to explain a table or an icon or an area of the screen, little else is present to soften the steep learning curve this game features. The manual while thick with historic background and successful in its attempts to explain the aim of the game, fails spectacularly to provide a structured reference of HOW to play the game. Also lacking is a reference to the various levels of technological advancements, or the particular attributes of the various nation states you as the player can choose.

The last tool used to light the way - the tutorial campaign - is poorly executed too: only the basics are covered while the more complex concepts are completely glossed over. Such is the feeling that any progress made in the mastering of EU is done in the dark - stumbling and bumbling about - which is not a lot of fun.

Europa Universalis' depth is both its major attraction and its greatest flaw. Too complicated for casual sittings, Europa Universalis will reward those with strong commitment, patience, and tolerance. A photographic memory would help lots too!

March Stepnik

RATING

FOR

- Keen attention to historical detail.
- Rich diplomacy model
- Less combat-oriented empire management.

AGAINST

- Steep learning curve
- Shoddy support material
- Early stages can be slow

OVERALL

A rich strategy so close to being a revelation, remains a headache instead.

68

Kohan

Immortal Sovereigns: The real time strategy cocktail of choice

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Strategy First

PUBLISHER

Timegate Studios

DISTRIBUTOR

GameNation

PRICE

\$79.95

RATING

Unrated

AVAILABLE

Now



Dragonses!



Yep, it's definitely water



Uruk-hai march on some burning trees



Have at you, foul devils!

SYSTEM

NEED

PII-300;64 MBRAM
Win9x/2K/Me/XP;
4x CD-Rom;
400Mb HDD; 4MB
videocard

WANT

PIII-800,
128MB RAM,
otherwise same as
above

Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns is one finger-lickin' little tasty tidbit set to tantalise any RTS gamer's senses. Like any good gaming burger, the basic ingredients are similar to those used in WarCraft, Age of Empires and Heroes of Might & Magic. Once the secret herbs and spices are mixed in, the game takes on a whole new flavour and looks to give a spicy kick to a tired genre.

The precept is simple - when the world of Khaldun was created, 100,000 immortal beings named the Kohan were created and bestowed with powers well beyond that of the common man. They presided over Khaldun for eons until sinister forces, called the Shadow, began to tear away at the fabric of their society. The Kohan were overthrown during the Great Cataclysm.

In Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns, the Kohan are beginning to awaken from their stasis within individual amulets - a gift from their Creator when Khaldun was born. Their memories of the times before the Cataclysm are at first incomplete but gradually improve with experience. The Kohan are now divided into four factions: the Ceyah, the Council, the Royalist and the Nationalist. Each faction has their own units, abilities

and persuasions, all of which can be gained if an enemy town is captured.

The single-player campaign begins with Darius Javidan, newly awakened Kohan who seeks to restore Khaldun to its former glory. The sixteen scenarios are tightly bound with a very strong and appealing storyline on par with the Heroes of Might & Magic Chronicles series.

A new look at resources

Like all strategy games, a successful game of Kohan relies on good resource management. Unlike most of the RTS genre, however, there is no basic 'peasant' unit. In fact, Engineers can only construct Heroes of

The cities serve two purposes: to create units and supply them. As usual, each city must evolve its way along the construction tree in order to supply the bigger and meaner units. Most of the upgrades are standard within RTS games, such as Barracks, Quarries, Temples etc. As the city grows, the Supply Zone around it also increases (see boxout), which allows your military divisions to heal and re-equip.

Two's a company, three's a war!

Unlike WarCraft, Age of Empires and the like, units aren't moved individually into combat. Instead, the troops are amassed into companies complete with one captain, four

"Kohan is a neat little strategy focussed number with a deceptively WarCraft looking face."

Might & Magic-style cities and outposts! All resources are procured and managed behind the scenes to keep Kohan's focus purely on combat. As a consequence, the resources are listed as a 'per minute' rating rather than a quantity making it easy to judge the quantities of resources required to maintain your units. As long as cities are constructed and improved regularly, resource management is a breeze!

front line troops and two optional support troops. The support roles are important - if a Ranger, for example, is selected in a support capacity, the entire company does not suffer movement penalties in rough terrains. Paladins, on the other hand, can greatly improve a company's morale.

The company captains can be replaced with Kohan heroes who can contribute their



The Blue Mountains sure are lovely this time of year



Stay on target... stay on target...



Spot fires proved the biggest concern

ZONING OUT

One of the Kohan's most innovative features is the use of zones to determine city population limits, company areas of control and supply lines. Each of these serves a different purpose.

The Population Zone, for example, allows you to identify areas where populations are making their presence felt on the surrounding landscape. This way, you know when an enemy town or outpost is nearby but you aren't sure exactly where. Similarly, you also portray the same presence to your enemies.... In addition, the Population Zone shows you where you can't build other cities too closely - much like in Civilization. This means your cities have to be spaced out too.

The Supply Zone indicates where your companies can commission new units to replace those lost in battle and heal those who made it back. Furthermore, if an outcrop is found within the Supply Zone, it can automatically add important resources to your dwindling supplies. The final area is the Control Zone. This demarcates where your companies can begin to interact with anything they come across, such as ruins, other towns or the enemy. It can also give you prior warning when the enemy is nearby.

powers to the benefit of their companies. The heroes earn experience points during combat so they gradually become enlightened about their past before the Cataclysm and rediscover their powers. As company leaders, the Kohan can choose to personally engage the enemy or better command their troops from behind alongside the support team and the archers. Beware though - the developers have neglected to include a variety of acknowledgment remarks so you will hear the same things over and over again when you give orders.

I will protect you

To protect the weaker units, each company may be placed in any of four formations prior to battle, being Pressed mode, Column mode, Skirmish mode and Combat mode. The first two formations are passive - the company is capable of faster movement for combat effectiveness and will not engage the enemy unless ordered to do so. The last two formations, however, are quite the opposite. The slower company with its wider visual range will be on the lookout for enemy units and will initiate attack if necessary. In these positions, the more valuable units are protected by the front line troops.

Once battle is joined, however, there are

very few options except to either Retreat or Rout - all other commands are ignored as combat is automated. Clerics in the sidelines will automatically heal other members of their company while Magicians will raise elementals at their own discretion. Unfortunately, it is impossible to attack selected enemy units such as spell casters without flanking the enemy with another company.

In Kohan, a company's morale is vital - if the troops feel that the situation is lost, they will flee in a direct line towards your Supply Zones and they will not respond to any other orders until they reach their destination. Even if they have to travel through the enemy to do it! Morale is greatly compromised when company captains and heroes are killed.

Resurrection

The Kohan are immortal, they can be regained if they fall during battle. Each one returns to their amulet form after they 'die'. Once this happens, they can be awakened at the cost of 50 gold pieces but all previously accrued experience is lost. While this does not matter at early stages of the campaign/game, it does engender a little extra wariness when your well-experienced and beloved heroes begin losing a battle.

One thing that stands out about Kohan is

that the developers, Strategy First, have kept true to their name. As the number of companies is limited by the number of cities you have constructed and upgraded, there is almost no way you can build up enough units to tank rush the opposition. While this makes gameplay a little more thoughtful in single player missions, this limitation is a great boon amidst the multiplayer market! Multiplayer games can be found on GameSpy with a host of maps, options and skirmish modes available.

In the end, there can be more than one

Kohan is a neat little strategy focussed number with a deceptively WarCraft looking face. As it is played, the hidden herbs and spices come to the fore, making Kohan an enjoyable game to play. It is not a difficult game - even at the 'hard' level - and it is surprisingly addictive as the storyline guides you through each of the missions (you can make more with the editor included). Already, Strategy First have released a prequel, Kohan: Ahriman's Gift, in anticipation of Kohan's growing number of fans.

Ryan Hovingh

RATING

FOR

- Exciting storyline
- Hours of gameplay
- Different look to a tired genre

AGAINST

- Repetitive sound
- General combat focus
- No tank-rushing!

OVERALL

A unique gem in the strategy landscape

82

UEFA 2001/2002

Like I said last month, I will kick you in the balls

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Silicon Dreams

PUBLISHER

Take 2

DISTRIBUTOR

Take 2

PRICE

\$89.95

RATING

G

AVAILABLE

Now



Volleyball tryouts at Wembley proved a big hit



James Cottee for South Melbourne



Hey and a ho, look at me in my fancy shorts



You put your left foot in, you put your...

SYSTEM

NEED

PII 350

64Mb RAM

16Mb Videocard

400Mb HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 1500+

128Mb RAM

GeForce2 GTS

1Gb HDD

The UEFA Champions League began its long history in the cauldron of the Western Front, 1915, when a group of shellshocked soldiers staggered out of their trenches and started up a game. After a few days of mucking about, interrupted by the occasional need to remove body parts from the field of play, the participants suddenly realised that there were many strange foreigners on their teams, and all of them were getting paid more than they were. Thus the modern game was born.

The war soon ended but the spirit of those early trench matches lived on, and it wasn't until the UN ban in '56 that land mines, mustard gas and machine gun nests were finally removed from the game. This change left many older players floundering with redundant skills and poor prospects. The state of the game at the time was described succinctly by 'Shorty' Higgins, goalie and heavy machine gunner for Tottenham as 'rooted'. Disgruntled players like Higgins soon formed a new league, a Champions league, of hardened veterans and multiple amputees calling it UEFA, the Union of Elitist Effing Arseholes (But that spells UEEA! - Ed).

Proud tradition

With FIFA having such a stranglehold on the Soccer game market any competitor to it has to try a different angle, and the UEFA Champions League provides that angle for Silicon Dreams. UEFA, like most soccer games, is a console port (I guess he's being ironic - Ed). In this case the game was developed for Sony's PS2 as a competitor to FIFA and Konami's ISS Pro Revolution series. UEFA takes the philosophical middle ground between these two titles, with more manual control over shooting and passing than FIFA but without the more total control of ISS. As a result it is more difficult to master than FIFA 2002 but more accessible than ISS.

"..UEFA gives the player a more hands on approach to gameplay."

The simplicity of the FIFA series lies in its use of button combinations to do special moves; however many of these can be tricky to learn and execute. UEFA has few button combination moves and your tricky stuff has to be done more directly, by actually doing it. Passing on the other hand is as simple as it is in the FIFA titles, with just a tap of the pass button

in the general direction toward the receiver. Pinpoint passes and crosses make UEFA a very attack-oriented game, which is a good thing as the realities of soccer can be very different. Nobody wants to play a bunch of Nil all draws in a row, or even one for that matter.

The downside of this is that the defensive game can be a bit frustrating. After a while you'll begin to regret the UN's decision to ban automatic weapons as you vainly try and hold back a rampant opponent, and of course your computer opponent can always get his men in just the right place at just the right time, bastard. Another aspect of the game that gets in the way of good defensive play, one that could have easily been fixed, is the lack of any

indication of when your player has the ball. Many times you'll hit the tackle button when close to an opponent and then watch dumbstruck as your player lobs the ball over the side line because he actually already had it in his possession. A simple change in the colour of the player indicator would make a big difference. These failings aren't as serious as they sound



Ball handling has nothing to do with hands



The camera loves you darling



Cue: power failure to television - NOW!

UNCONSOLABLE



The fact that this is a console port is unfortunately evident in some of the game's little quirks. Sometimes when you change control to a new player he'll freeze for a second, just long enough to let an attacker get around him or get a pass away. Apparently this only happens in the PC version and as you can imagine is the sort of thing that can make you start lobbing drink cans at your monitor and spitting on the nearest Policeman. And of course the menus have no mouse support.

however and the true test of the balance of any soccer game is in the scores. UEFA's AI makes your opponents hard in defence and as a result, unlike FIFA which has a weakness for silly high scoring matches once the player gets the hang of the button/key combinations, scores in UEFA are usually within the bounds of normality, like 2-1 instead of 14-7.

UEFA, League of Champions

All 32 of last year's qualifying teams are included in the game, and you can enjoy them via the UEFA Tournament mode, Friendly or Tournament modes. More interestingly for the history buffs there are also a selection of classic teams from the past: the mighty Liverpool side of the 70s is in there alongside equally legendary Ajax and Real Madrid XIs from yesteryear. There's the '70 Feyenoord, '92 Juventus and of course the '83 Port Macquarie Hotspurs, known throughout Europe for their immaculately sliced Oranges and clean socks. These special teams can be played as part of an eight team Cup or a sixteen team League depending on how many games you want to play.

UEFA doesn't make too many demands on your PC as long as you keep the resolution no more than 1024X768. If you want to go the whole hog and crank it up to 1280X1024X32 with all details on you'll need a very fast

GeForce2 GTS or a GeForce3 card hooked up to a 1GHz+ machine to get smooth play. For some reason the cutscene style post-goal celebration scenes and opening sequences when the players arrive on the pitch run at a much slower frame rate than the action so don't panic if the game begins in slow motion! Over a dozen different stadiums have been recreated, apparently faithful to the originals but as I've never been to any of them I can't vouch for the truth of that statement. They do look rather nice however.

The animation of the players is very good with rippling shirts, varied facial expressions and bump-mapped grass that sits up above the surface and allows players boots to 'sink' into it adding to the gameplaying experience. Of course if you're looking hard enough to notice the players boots sinking into the grass you're soon going to notice it on the score board, but it's nice to know that someone cares about the little details. The in-game commentary is also notable for its relative lack of repetitiveness and the use of Guy Mobery and Barry Venison, who should be familiar to anyone who watches the UEFA highlights on SBS TV.

FIFA or UEFA?

Ultimately, on the PC at any rate, your choice comes down to FIFA or UEFA and it is

really just a matter of style. UEFA gives the player a more hands on approach to gameplay, with a lot less in the way of fiddly control combinations. FIFA has a much broader range of teams, nations and players but a weaker AI. FIFA is more of an arcade game than UEFA, which in turn has more depth. It's a personal taste thing so you might want to download a demo and see if it tickles you.

George Soropos



RATING

FOR

- Semi-hardcore game action
- Good overall presentation
- Good AI

AGAINST

- Irksome interface
- Only UEFA teams
- Console port

OVERALL

A good effort for those who want more control in their soccer games

84

Army Men RTS

Could this be the first Army Men game that doesn't suck?

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Pandemic

PUBLISHER

3DO

DISTRIBUTOR

Take2

PRICE

\$69.95

RATING

G

AVAILABLE

Now



Not the giant glue gun...!!!



All your base are kitchen refuse

SYSTEM

NEED

Duron 800

128Mb RAM

GeForce2 MX

500Mb HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 1500+

256Mb RAM

GeForce2 GTS

500Mb HDD



War is hell in the sandpit



Remote combat... get it?



Protect the giant punk barbie

RATING

FOR

- Great looking terrain
- Hilarious opening film
- Good clean fun

AGAINST

- Too easy
- Strange soundtrack
- Not enough variety

OVERALL

Fun and distracting but too simple to have any real lasting appeal

80

Could this be the best Army Men game ever? Well, the answer to that is a resounding yes! Does this make the game a classic? No, it's still an Army Men game. Using what appears to be a simplified Dark Reign II engine, Army Men RTS is a simple excursion into green plastic military simulation. Introduced by a truly inspired and genuinely funny FMV obviously inspired by Apocalypse Now, Army Men RTS takes the player on a journey up the back yard and through the house to kill a Kurtz-style rogue Green Colonel gone native with the enemy Tan soldiers.

Missions differ depending on where in the house or yard the soldiers have progressed to, ranging from the usual build and defend a base whilst simultaneously trying to kill the enemy style fare to a more unusual and far more enjoyable mission in which the player treks through a basement killing ants and trying to avoid spiders. The individual missions are quite straight forward, the directives only changing once the player has achieved the first objective. Likewise the resource management component of the game is kept very simple utilising only two different materials, plastic and batteries. Plastic is used in all construction so is in hot demand. Batteries are used in

vehicles for power. Both resources can be readily "mined" from toys left laying around the house and yard. As a truly inspired touch, fallen enemy soldiers leave piles of melted plastic which can be used for resources if the player gets desperate. Troop types consist of all the usual suspects - machine gunners, snipers, tanks, helicopters - nothing new here.

Plain Green RTS

Strategy really comes second place to the ability to build the biggest army in the shortest time in the vast majority of missions, making the game somewhat like a Fischer Price My First RTS. The game overall comes across as being a little too simple. This may be good for the littlies trying their first RTS but for any seasoned gamer it won't be anything more than a few pleasant hours of distraction.

Graphics are functional for the most part, only shining when it comes to the actual terrain. No matter if the mission is set in the house or garden the terrain looks fantastic, dominated by giant toys, tools, food stuffs and other obstacles. At different times the player has to fight across dirty, food stained linoleum, a muddy yard in front of the dog house or around a comfy looking lounge suite. Each of the levels gives a nice sense of size, effectively making the soldiers look tiny. The musical score proves to be a little strange a lot of the time, sounding

much more celebratory than militaristic and more than a little reminiscent of a Christmas Carol at times. No real complaints here but it does seem at odds to the rest of the game.

Army Men RTS is a pleasant way to spend an afternoon but it will prove no challenge to anybody familiar with the RTS genre. Still, it should make an excellent to the fine art of RTS to a player unfamiliar with its intricacies.

Daniel Wilks



V8 Challenge

Burn rubber on the slopes of Anthony's beloved Mount Pan



Sweet Bathurst, how I miss thee



You young hoons! I'll paddle ye, see if I don't



Nice driving Stavros



King of the mountain?

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Dice
PUBLISHER
EA
DISTRIBUTOR
EA
PRICE
\$79.95
RATING
G8+
AVAILABLE
Now

SYSTEM

NEED

Duron 800
128Mb RAM
GeForce2 MX
500Mb HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 1600+
256Mb RAM
GeForce3 Ti200
750Mb HDD

RATING

FOR

- Familiar ol' faithful Tracks
- Fairly realistic Handling
- Multitude of setup options

AGAINST

- Indestructible cars
- Limited opponents
- No Brockie

OVERALL

A solid and dependable racer with Aussie V8 flavour!

79

There was a time when every ad for oil or cheap used cars or whatever that starred Peter Brock caused me to stand up in the lounge room and shout "Brockie!" while extending my arms in supplication toward the television. This was because I spent three years in Bathurst, and three years is enough to give you at least some form of the V8 Fever, even if all it amounts to is shouting at TV. They even call their local FM radio station B Rock.

As a result there have been a couple of half-hearted attempts to model the great mountain in a computer game, and one of the more dismal failures was Dick Johnson's V8 Challenge. Or was it V8 Adventure? Either way, this is most definitely not that game.

Tasty V8s

In typical EA Sports style, V8 Challenge is built simply, effectively and runs like a dream. Sure, it mightn't jump out of the box as the most exciting racing game you've ever seen, but it can be guaranteed to contain not only Mount Panorama but also a swag full of other V8 racing circuits both here in Australia and abroad, in such countries as South Africa where the sport has more than a toehold and doesn't get swamped by that NASCAR rubbish. Yes, here is a game where you most

definitely have to turn right on occasion. The V8 is a big lumbering beast of a machine that will howl its way up to 250kph in 5th and then catapult you into the concrete barrier when you try to treat it like a rally car. The secret folks is minimum wheel input. It's hugely easy to spin a fat-arsed V8 if you put just the merest suggestion of a tyre in the grass, and V8 Challenge models this with an unforgiving degree of accuracy.

Minimum Spec

The game complies with the minimum standard that gamers have come to expect from this type of title, with single race, time trial, and championship races. Options also exist for car setup which contains dozens of options allowing the player to tweak everything from each individual gear ratio to the front and rear ride-heights and suspension. Sadly there's no option to give your car a custom paint job, which could have provided hours of amusement.

As well as the V8 Challenge of the title, there's also the option to race V8 utes. These souped up utilities have a completely different aerodynamic profile and weight distribution and require a whole new set of skills to navigate successfully around a wet track at night when the six guys in front of you have just spun out and are flying all over the road.

So how does the game feel? Mostly pretty good. The cars are heavy as we expect, the engine sound is meaty, the tracks really look like their real-world counterparts and the sense of speed at 250kph is suitably pronounced. The only real niggle is that processing restraints mean there are only a maximum of 14 opponents in any one race, rather than the huge field encountered in real life. This sadly minimises the opportunities for really massive pile ups. And it's also possible to have a head on where the combined speed of the two vehicles exceeds 500kph, and yet keep on driving after the car has stopped bouncing along the track on its head.

A solid performer, and much more effective as a V8 simulator than previous entrants in this field.

Anthony Fordham



Flight Downunder 2002

Fly the Aussie skies in Flight Sim 2002

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

IMG

PUBLISHER

IMG

DISTRIBUTOR

Take2

PRICE

\$49.95

RATING

G

AVAILABLE

Now



Dynamic aircraft active on the taxiway



A stand-off at Hobart

SYSTEM

NEED

Flight Sim 2002
300Mhz CPU,
64Mb RAM,
8mb 3D video card,
650mb HDD

WANT

1Ghz CPU, 256mb
RAM, 32mb 3D
accelerator,
Soundblaster audio
card, 2.3Gb HDD



Get off the runway! I'm coming in!



Overflying Sydney International



Showing the Pre-Programmed GPS

RATING

FOR

- Quality Australian ATC recordings
- Versions for both FS2000/02
- Made in Australia!

AGAINST

- Fewer new features than previous edition
- No printed flight plans.
- Value for Money

OVERALL

Not quite The Complete Australian Flight Experience

70

This is your Captain speaking. Welcome aboard Flight Downunder 2002 (FDU2002) for your flight around Australia. We will soon be departing, so please ensure your seats, trays and plastic explosives are locked in the upright position and you have fastened your safety belts."

You don't need to listen to the cabin talk, because with FDU2002, you have the opportunity to sit in the pilot's seat and listen to real Australian Air Traffic Control (ATC). The product is an add-on package for Microsoft's Flight Simulator 2002, which has been updated from the original package for Flight Simulator 2000 and promises to provide the Complete Australian Experience as the hype would lead you to believe. You require a copy of Flight Simulator 2002 (Pro or Standard) installed. A version for Flight Simulator 2000 is also included on the CD.

You liddle rippa

FDU 2002 comprises in excess of 1,000 individually recorded audio files of real-world communications between pilots and control towers at over 55 locations across Australia. These audio files are then indexed and played accordingly as the background ATC chatter when you are flying within a particular airspace. For example, if you were flying

around Bankstown Airport in Sydney, you would hear real audio files recorded from this very same airport. Audio files for all major capital International airports are included and most major General Aviation airports to match.

Yankie flight instructions

FDU2002 features two types of modules (called Adventures in FS2002) which utilise the pre-recorded audio communications. The generic Australian ATC module allows you to fly anywhere in our wide brown land with background ATC chatter. The addition of 43 pre-programmed flights provides the second means of tuning into the realistic communication happening in the background. It is important to note that

offering from Microsoft.

I still call Australia Home

Also included are the 43 flights (as mentioned above) which, when loaded, provide you with the pre-programmed GPS, radio frequencies pre-tuned and place you at a realistic departure point for your flight. A variety of flights are available for most of the default Flight Simulator aircraft. Airborne dynamic scenery is also included but seems pointless given that FS2002 now includes a dynamic scenery engine as default. No static airport scenery or scenery upgrades are included. The only other new addition is the inclusion of an edited version of the Australian

"..flying around Bankstown Airport in Sydney, you would hear real audio files recorded from this very same airport."

communication with ATC facilities is not interactive in FDU2002. You cannot provide or receive recorded Australian instructions that directly affect your flight with this add-on. FDU2002 still uses the default Microsoft FS2002 interactive ATC engine for issuing and read back of flight instructions. FDU2002 simply provides Australian audio content that forms the basis of the background chatter replacing the generic

Aircraft Register. Given that it is simple for the end user to create pre-programmed flights with GPS functionality with the default FS2002 software, airborne dynamic scenery is not really needed and you can look up a complete version of the Aussie aircraft register online. Flight Downunder 2002 will likely disappoint unless you are extremely patriotic.

Dean Bielanowski

Gadget Tycoon

Can I inspect your gadget?



Maybe there are some gadgets hidden in this junk...



Toilet testers... worst job in the world?



So much gadgetty potential!



Now's she's one hot gadget

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Monte Cristo

PUBLISHER

Monte Cristo

DISTRIBUTOR

Take 2

PRICE

\$29.95

RATING

G

AVAILABLE

Now

SYSTEM

NEED

Celeron 400

64Mb RAM

8Mb Videocard

300Mb HDD

WANT

Duron 950

128Mb RAM

16Mb Videocard

500Mb HDD

RATING

FOR

- Low sys requirements
- Cheap price for the quality
- Some good bits to enjoy

AGAINST

- Fairly plain graphics
- Too fiddly to be easily enjoyed
- No replay value

OVERALL

Not really a true tycoon game but very entertaining despite its shortcomings

77

Despite the misleading title, *Gadget Tycoon* is not truly a Tycoon style game, more of a business sim/puzzle/resource management style game. Cast in the role of CEO of an R&D/manufacturing plant, *Gadget Tycoon* charges the player with researching, manufacturing, advertising and selling gadgets through a number of missions. Have you ever fancied designing a toilet with built in TV, voice activated flushing mechanism and super-fresh scented toilet paper? Well, if you have (and can anyone honestly say they haven't? We are human after all) *Gadget Tycoon* is the game for you.

Gameplay revolves around the player managing all aspects of the design firm, from hiring staff to selling the eventual output. *Gadget Tycoon* is broken up into a number of individual scenarios, each necessitating the player to make a specified amount of the green stuff before a rival company. Through the various stages of the missions, the player needs to hire the right staff for the job, whether it be manning machines on the assembly line or researching new products. Each member of staff has ratings for competency and morale. The higher the two scores the faster and more proficiently the

work can be completed. Researches need to be set to research and line workers need to be told what to make. Other tasks include advertising, keeping employees happy with gifts (bribes) pay rises (bribes) or upgrading the recreation area (bribes), maintaining the factory, dealing with industrial espionage, the Mafia, paying the bills and all round running the business. Of special note is the tutorial which is good, simple and explains all of the basic function of the game in a good hands-on manner, allowing the player to move through all of the different aspects of the basic game quickly but with enough detail to get you playing fast.

Go Go Gadget Graphics!

Whilst not fantastic by any stretch, *Gadget Tycoon* has a functional and sometimes quite amusing graphics scheme, comprised by and large of isometric views of the work area populated by simply animated figures. Occasionally a small flash of brilliance will appear on screen, such the foreman bashing his control panel with a large wooden mallet to fix the production line or a researcher putting their feet up on the desk and catching a few Z's when the boss's back is turned. The bright colours are a little reminiscent of a small child's

My First Toy but other than that there is nothing to complain about. Similarly the sound track is simple but effective, made up of generic happy game tunes and factory noises.

Overall, *Gadget Tycoon* is not a great game, too slow or fiddly for many and a little too simple for seasoned Tycoon or business sim players. It is however a very solid game, delivering decent gameplay throughout with a good deal of stability. Low system requirements also mean that *Gadget Tycoon* can be played by just about anyone and a price that won't break the bank makes it a cheap and worthy time waster.

Daniel Wilks



FLOTSAM & JETSAM



DAY TRADER

DEVELOPER: Monte Cristo
PUBLISHER: Monte Cristo
DISTRIBUTOR: Take 2
PRICE: Sell! Sell!
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

This game is a liar. It lies to you on the box, promising to deliver all of the fun and excitement of the stock market in a PC game. Where is the fun? Where is the excitement? Whatever this game is it contains none of either, instead managing to be chock full of terrible sound, worse gameplay, crappy graphics and an obtuse and frustrating interface.

The basic premise of the game seems to be to make money by playing the stocks. To do this you need to hire people to deal, take care of legal matters, artificially inflate stock prices and generally behave in a manner most people play games to avoid having to do. Ultimately, the experience of playing Day Trader is pretty much like going to work - long periods of doing nothing followed by a quick rush to get everything done and the people on high giving you some obtuse commands that you have no idea how to follow through. The only thing that could make the game even marginally worthwhile would be the ability to throw yourself out a window when the stock market crashes. Sadly this is missing.

Come to think of it, the Day Trader box isn't lying at all. It does contain all the fun and excitement of playing the stock market. None. Day Trader is interminably dull.

SCORE

Like going to work minus the satisfaction and money.

33



POLITICAL TYCOON

DEVELOPER: Monte Cristo
PUBLISHER: Monte Cristo
DISTRIBUTOR: Take 2
PRICE: A few hours of distraction
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

Unlike the other Tycoon style games in this month's Flotsam and Jetsam, Political Tycoon actually manages to be fun - for a while. Cast in the role of a world leader, Political Tycoon plays like a cross between Sim City and some other game which has currently slipped my mind - suffice to say that it's pretty derivative but not too bad for all of that.

Gameplay is based around a number of campaign scenarios in which the player must lead their people to victory by managing resources, developing technology, spying, trading, bombing and other political manoeuvres.

Unfortunately the best part of the game is the opening video, which actually manages to be very funny, showing an American President who looks like George "Dubya" Bush and speaks like Ronnie "Raygun" Reagan trying to do an arms deal with a middle eastern King, the whole debacle ending with the White House being blown up by a missile proudly stamped with the American Flag. Unfortunately, apart from the opening video the game is a bit of a lacklustre effort, occasionally showing flashes of wit but mostly just playing like something released 10 years ago. At least this game didn't try to convince us that it contained all the fun of the stock market.

SCORE

Not bad but pretty far from good

58



START-UP

DEVELOPER: Monte Cristo
PUBLISHER: Monte Cristo
DISTRIBUTOR: Take 2
PRICE: Cheque, Money Order or Pay Pal
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Now

Another bright idea for a business sim by our friends at Monte Cristo, this time allowing players to take the role of a young up and coming dot com mogul trying to make their fortune by ripping people off online.

The game takes place over a number of scenarios in which the player needs to develop a product, develop a marketing strategy etcetera, etcetera, blah, blah, blah. Start-Up is a boring game, pure and simple with nothing to recommend it save for the fact that it has nothing to do with disco and does not star Corey Haim. Rather than being purely bad, Start-Up commits the ultimate sin by just being nothing. It's dull, uninvolved and repetitive.

Controls are simple and fairly straightforward necessitating nothing more than the odd click here or there. Likewise the graphics are simple but serviceable, nothing to write home about but nothing too disappointing either. The music is terrible, kind of like techno elevator music. It's frustratingly bad and repeats ad-infinitum. The only thing that could have made Start-Up interesting would have been a feature allowing the player to cheat on their taxes, rot their employees and escape to Spain or some other non-extradition country with all the money. Sadly this is not the case.

SCORE

Boring beyond belief

20

Our resident hanging judge the Man in Black dredges the bargain bins for the very cheapest in digital entertainment



CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER

DEVELOPER: Krome Studios
PUBLISHER: Mattel
DISTRIBUTOR: Forgotten
PRICE: Like totally a lot of moolah dude!
RATING: W - for Wax Heads only
AVAILABLE: Like, totally now but so last year

It's a cruel indictment of a game when the best thing somebody can find to say about it is that one of the people you can choose to play looks absolutely hilarious, kind of like the kid who played Anakin in the first Star Wars movie if he had been repeatedly hit in the head with a spade. He's an ugly little bastard is Jon Jon, that's for sure. Apart from offering amusement at the misfortune of others, Championship Surfer is much like the vast majority of extreme sports simulations out there - extremely unimpressive.

As the name strongly suggests, Championship Surfer is a surfing game, or, more precisely, a turning-off-the-computer-in-disgust-after-missing-another-bloody-wave-due-to-clipping-problems-of-the-physics-engine-creating-the-wave-in-front-of-you-where-you-can't-catch-it game. There are a number of game types included in the package including Championship Circuit, Arcade, Trick Attack and some multi-player silliness.

Arcade is amusing for a while, necessitating the player to perform tricks whilst dodging such realistic obstacles a crates, scuba divers and WWII sea mines (He isn't joking - Ed). Gameplay is nearly entirely omitted from the game, requiring the player to do little more than move from side to side and occasionally press a button. It may be a bad pun but Championship Surfer is all wet.

SCORE

Jon Jon is a mutant

40



STARDOM: QUEST FOR FAME

DEVELOPER: Monte Cristo
PUBLISHER: Monte Cristo
DISTRIBUTOR: Take 2
PRICE: More than it's worth
RATING: G
AVAILABLE: Weddings, Parties, Barmitzvahs

Stuck somewhere in the middle ground between Theme Hospital and Who Wants To Be A Millionaire, Stardom: Your Quest For Fame fails to live up to either of its not too lofty forebears. The game places you on the ladder of success, at the bottom rung of course and challenges the player to backstab and connive their way to the top of their chosen profession. Though the characters available to choose seem to have different attributes the numbers seem to be totally arbitrary, having no impact on gameplay whatsoever.

Each stage takes place in a different office, the player starting at the bottom and trying to attain enough fame points to progress to the next level. This can be done in a number of ways from finding news stories to finding out secrets and telling them to the world at large or just finding them laying around. Every now and then a character will ask you trivia questions which seem to be taken from a pool of about 100 and randomly recycled. If this actually sounds interesting I apologise for misleading you. Stardom: Your Quest for Fame is dull repetitive and seems to have no real mechanics, making up point scores and tallies as it goes along.

SCORE

Pretentious titles do not make for good games.

32



MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

DEVELOPER: House of Tales
PUBLISHER: CDV Software
DISTRIBUTOR: Take 2
PRICE: Heightened stress levels
RATING: M
AVAILABLE: Now

Why do the French and Germans keep making adventure games? Somebody should tell them that the vast majority of their exports are terrible. These German developers have really done themselves a disservice with Mystery of the Druids, an amateurish and incredibly buggy game which comes across as a washed out version of Gabriel Knight.

Taking the role of a Scotland Yard detective investigating a series of murders linked to Druidic activity, the player must solve the titular Mystery of the Druids both in the present and the past, saving his own life in the process.

What could be an interesting story is seriously hampered by poor graphics, some very obtuse or downright stupid puzzles and more bugs than a flensing pit (look it up). One puzzle has you drugging a wino with industrial alcohol so you can steal some change to make a phone call to a hotel. Why couldn't you just borrow the money from a friend or use the phone in your office? To make matters worse, Mystery of the Druids crashes very frequently and has some major problems with clipping allowing characters to walk through objects at will. The only mystery of the Druids remaining is why they haven't taken an arcane and bloody revenge on House of Tales for defaming them with such a poor game.

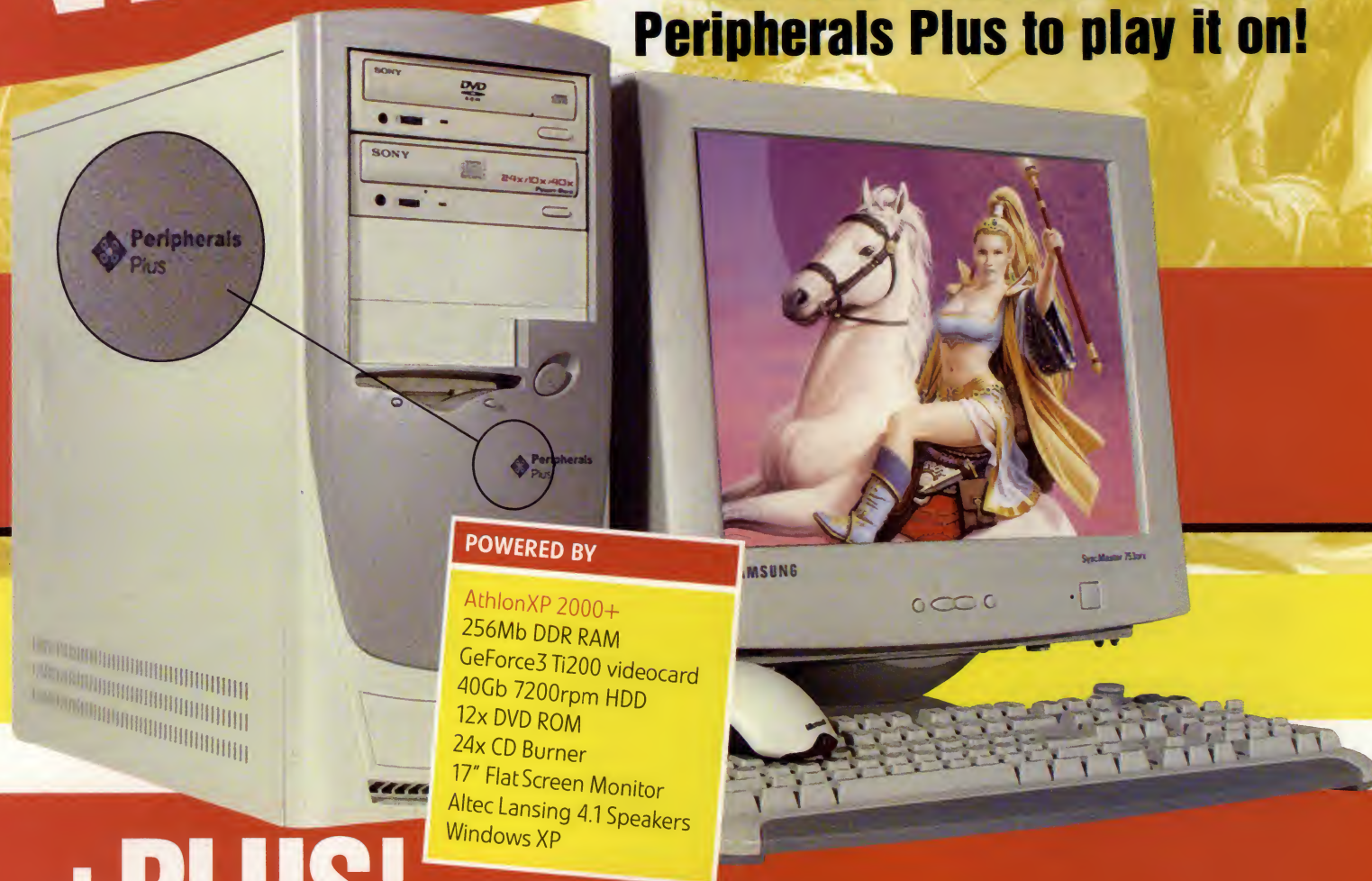
SCORE

At least it's better than anything by the Arxel Tribe

51

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tech

In review

The silicon state of the art

The heavens rejoice and a choir of angels sings on high. Throw your arms in the air and party like you just don't care. Shake your booty. Do anything happy. Just make sure you do whatever it takes to express your joy. Why? Well, for one simple reason - the Beast is back!

You prayed to your dark gods and we have offered our benediction. You wanted it back and we bring it back. That's how much we care. There was a void in all of our lives due to the loss of the Beast, but that void has once again been filled and we can go on with our normal lives knowing that it will always be there for us. Over the last couple of months the advance in PC architecture has meant that the Beast and Beastie have come back bigger, faster and stronger than before. Have a look. I'm sure you will be impressed.

Also this month we unveil our new look tech section. The new addition is a tech feature - this month our girl on the street, Ms Jaye Gallagher takes an in depth look at what we can expect in the future when it comes to monitors. From the humble CRT to LCD, Organic LED and some truly strange ideas, Jaye probes into what we may be watching our games on in the near future. Of course we still have our normal reviews, this month ranging from a roundup of CD-RW drives to a first look at the new wireless Thrustmaster Firestorm gamepad. Put your feet up, read on, enjoy and send all fan mail to yours truly. The Beast is back. Yeah Baby!

Daniel Wilks
Technical Editor
danielw@next.com.au



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THE PCPP TECH AWARDS SYSTEM



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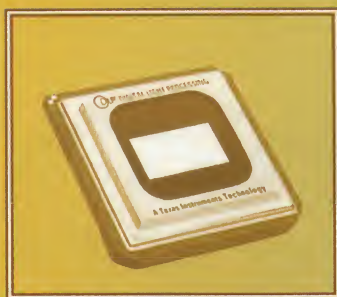
The Value Award is given in the PowerTest each month to the product that offers the best balance between performance and cost. This award also takes into account any extras that come with the product.



In our definitive Hotware reviews, any product deemed revolutionary, of exemplary value, or simply so cool it's a must-have, will receive a score above 90%, and the coveted PC PowerPlay Gold award.

THE PCPP HOTWARE RATINGS SYSTEM

- 90+** Excellent, Gold Award. A must buy.
- 80-89** Worthy product, which is hard to fault. May be slightly lacking in extra features, value or performance.
- 60-79** Competent product, significantly behind the State of the Art.
- 40-59** Mediocre with little to recommend it.
- 0-39** A dog. Avoid.
- Distributor** The local point of contact for the product.
- Price** The RRP at the time of going to print.
- URL** Where to find further relevant information.



FUTURE vision

It's the most important component of your PC, for without a monitor your flashy overpowered GeForce3 Ti500 would be nothing. And yet, for so long the monitor has been sidelined. It's just a fancy TV, what more do we need to know about it? Jay Gallagher takes a closer look.





"We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I will spend the rest of our lives."

If science fiction shows have taught us anything, it's that computers come in two varieties: the big serious computer that looks like a fridge, and has been afflicted by a terrible plague of blinking lights on every surface; and the ones that sit on the desks of the 'people in charge'. The latter are so thin, sleek, and simple that you barely notice they're there: they're almost pieces of obscure modern art. Having something on your desktop that looks suitable for monitoring fleet deployments in neighbouring star systems is great for fostering your Napoleon complex; the problem is that modern PCs don't really measure up. The principle problem lies with our monitors.

The monitors owned by most people these days are boxy, beige, flickering monstrosities, that emit an irritating high pitched whine. Tres fashionable, and really good headache producing material. So, does the future hold any change from this dubious status-quo? And if so, exactly how soon? And for how much?

First off, lets have a look at the main technological weigh-ins, and how they work...

The Reigning Champion: Cathode Ray Tubes.

How do we predict the future?
We look to the past - and there's a venerable century of history behind the box that sits in countless lounge rooms, and desks throughout the world. The basic idea of the CRT is very simple - spew out a beam of electrons at high speed from one end of a vacuum chamber, and have them bang into a phosphor coating on the other end of the chamber - the impact makes the phosphor glow. Aim the beam around the place with magnets, fiddle how strong the beam is from time to

time, and you can draw pictures on the phosphor.

This is, of course, neat, and was especially neat back in 1897. It does mean, though, that CRTs tend to have a distended shape leading back from the screen to the "Electron Gun". Magnets can only bend those electrons around so much, after all. (And no, you can't destroy submarines from orbit with an electron gun).

Our modern CRTs have come a long way, thankfully, and now have massive flat screens, and are considerably shorter than two feet deep - however, they still flicker, still whine, still have 'kill

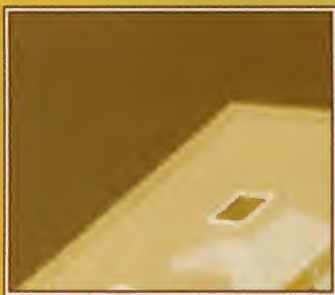
you stone dead, no saving throw' voltages running around inside them. Worst of all they're still boxy, and take up masses of precious desk space.

At least for now. A number of different companies have been working on a next generation super thin CRT, that, rather than having a single electron gun, which illuminates the whole screen, has an array of nano-sized emitters - several per pixel - which beam electrons directly onto each individual pixel. Otherwise known as Field Emission Displays, or FEDs, they've been tricky to actually build. After all, they need to enclose a reasonable

vacuum between two wafers of glass in a space only a few millimetres thick, and still be both robust, and have no bulges or bumps anywhere.

As a display, though, these new CRTs have all the advantages of regular CRTs - no viewing angle restrictions, great colour depth and motion clarity, and, are better than old CRTs power-wise. Only throwing the electrons a millimetre or two between the plates takes 20% of the power, and runs far cooler, than their boxy ancestors. And, best of all, all of the old-school CRT techniques for designing things like phosphor coatings can still be used in their design, they have a massive base of established research and manufacturing techniques.





THE FRINGE, PART 1: IBM'S ROENTGEN PROJECT.

For those of you who don't keep up with the various big names from the dim dark history of science, Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen was the fellow responsible for the discovery of X-Rays. Now IBM, in their "we actually make up new physics here" research labs have stolen his name for their latest project to rule the world with the power of a nice navy-blue suit... No, wait! That's a project to develop a mind-numbingly high resolution LCD display - a display so good that doctors could read X-Ray images from it.

Now we're not just talking about more pixels, though it's certainly got that sporting a resolution of 2560 by 2048 pixels, but also much smaller pixels. Your common or garden LCD display has around 80-100 pixels per inch, whereas Roentgen has a whopping 200ppi. This means that images on this full 24-bit colour display will have better detail and clarity than the magazine you're holding now. It's scary, but a good kind of scary.

And how have they managed this? By replacing the exotic molybdenum and tungsten used in current LCDs with aluminium and copper, which conduct better, and are far cheaper. The display crams in a ridiculous two-and-a-half kilometres of microscopic wiring, and is built using structures as small as 5 microns. Eek! Of course, this is the fringe, so unless you know a for-hire crack commando unit who recently escaped their unjust military imprisonment, stealing industrial research prototypes is probably something you'll have to pass up.



The Young Up-and-Comers: Liquid Crystal Displays.

Many moons ago, one of those zany scientists of which we're all so fond, discovered that certain solids, like crystals for example, tend to twist the way light passed through them to align with their own molecular structure. They then discovered a new class of materials in which this direction of twist could be controlled electrically - they had both properties of crystals and liquids, and were thus labelled, creatively enough, "liquid crystals". Combine this with particular optical filters that only let light pass through them if it's twisted in a particular fashion, and suddenly you can electrically control the amount of light passing through the whole shebang. Paint a whole bunch of little liquid crystal spots on a piece of glass, wire them all up, and shine light through them and through a

suitable filter, and, **voila** - you can display pictures.

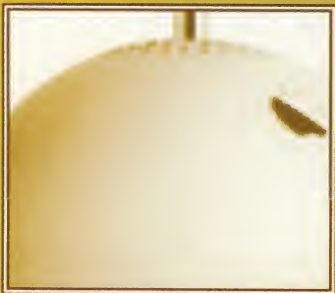
These days, we've gotten rather good at painting little liquid crystal spots on bits of glass, of course - modern desktop LCD displays contain around 2.4 million such spots for a 1024 by 768 pixel display, and endless lengths of microscopic control wiring. (Remember, that's one red, one green, and one blue spot per pixel, kids.) Rather good at making them, that is, but not perfect. The trouble is, it's a tricky business getting all of the spots just right - the number of pixels on a display increases with its overall area, and thus the odds on some pixels not coming out quite right gets exponentially higher with bigger screens.

LCDs have a lot of pros and a lot of cons - in their favour, they certainly look the part of a high-tech sci-fi style prop, they're easy on the eyes as they don't

flicker, they're light, thin, run cool, and consume relatively little power. Against them, obviously, having such a complicated and size-prone manufacturing process tends to make them pretty expensive - around twice as much as a similarly sized CRT. As they've got a fixed pixel grid, they display one resolution really well, and others tend to look a little dubious and blurry. They also don't cope so well with moving images, nor have as large a number of shades of colour available as, say, CRTs. And you can't stare at them from just anywhere - in front is fine, but things get a little dubious, side on.

The modern LCD does have two major backers, however. Firstly, being a relatively new technology, the inexorable mach of progress is its friend - manufacturing processes are always getting better, and the processes used to make LCD displays are the same as

those used in the manufacture of microprocessors. There's active research into making LCDs with better moving images, higher resolutions, and better colour depth. Secondly, it's available now, as a viable, if expensive, desktop alternative. Being something that people actually buy, as opposed to a pie-in-the-sky research project help attract interest in improving a technology. And they just look so cool.



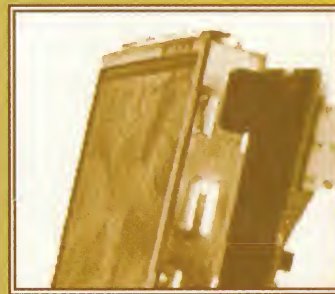


THE FRINGE, PART 2: DIGITAL LIGHT PROJECTORS.

Video projectors are a religious conversion experience - having sat through endless boring work-related powerpoint presentations, you'd think: "Just how interesting can they be?". And then you find a way to smuggle one home for the weekend, and watch "The Matrix" on your lounge room wall. There's no going back. Trouble is they're big, clunky, noisy, and actually noticeably warm up the room to use. Or that's how it is for now.

Nanotech might be far, far away from delivering anything useful, but micro-machines are already here and being put to all matter of useful things. Most important is what's called a DMD, by Texas Instruments, or a Digital Mirror Device. Take your standard SRAM memory chip, and then, over the top of each cell in the memory array, construct a microscopic mirror, hinged so that when a bit is set to "1", the mirror swivels down towards the cell. It's like having a piece of really high quality programmable aluminium foil, and is, oddly enough, really good for creating images by reflecting light from it's programmable surface.

Projectors using DMDs are smaller, lighter, quieter, and require less cooling than conventional LCD based projectors. Combine this with materials research that is continuing to extend bulb life, and projectors start to become a viable option for the lounge room. At least in a few years, when the price descends from the stratosphere.



The Great Unknown: Organic LED Displays.

If you haven't heard of LEDs, or Light Emitting Diodes, you've at least seen millions upon millions of them. They're the light-source of choice in electronic equipment, everywhere from your "Caps Lock" light, to the ubiquitous red scrolling signs so beloved of purveyors of high-class merchandise. Trouble is, they get hot, they're hard to make small, and they use a lot of electricity.

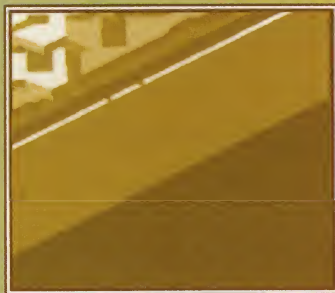
Enter a new class of materials, organic polymers - that's long chain molecules - that naturally glow when a current is passed through them. In comparison with conventional crystalline LEDs, they run cool, draw little current, and best of all can be suspended in a liquid during manufacturing. Why is that neat? Well, it means that you can essentially screen-print massive arrays of the things onto a prepared substrate,

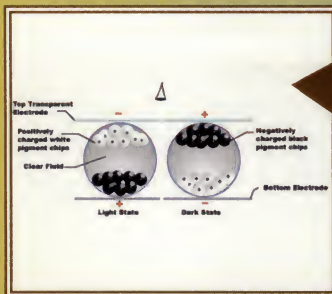
quickly and easily. Some such manufacturing processes even use inkjet printers to construct these screens.

Now monitors constructed from a large array of OLEDs have all the hallmarks of a dream display technology. They're low-power, relatively easy to produce using similar control circuitry to LCDs, without the pesky pixel construction issues, and because they directly produce their own light, they handle moving images brilliantly, and have a viewing angle as good as CRTs. They're also becoming the technology of choice for head mounted displays - the require no additional light-source, and can be made small enough to display 1024 by 768, and still sit on the front of your glasses. Best of all, believe it or not, there is active research in building OLED displays on flexible backings - for roll-up monitors so cool it boggles the mind.

And by thin, in this case I mean really

thin. Like, say, one millimetre in total thin. So what's the catch, and why don't we all have these dream displays? Well firstly, the organic polymers in question are cantankerous products of fringe chemistry - they get destroyed on exposure to air or water, so sealing them in rather well is an issue, as is their overall useable lifetime. This will improve with research, of course, but it's hard to say how fast when you're on the fringes. The other reason is simply that we don't have them, because we don't have them. The monitor technology space already presents a number of useable alternatives that aren't at all speculative, so it's difficult to find financial backing to produce a new technology - even one as radically hopeful as this. Sad but true. After all, who wouldn't want a TV quality monitor you can lift with a finger, or throw like a frisbee? (Parental supervision recommended for this activity.)





THE FRINGE, PART THREE: E-INK.

All of the technologies we've seen so far haven't really changed the basic paradigm of a display being something that sits on your desk, attached to your computer. E-Ink is a little different. It's a mess of transparent plastic beads about 100 microns wide, which are full of tiny black and white particles. By applying an electric charge to the beads, you can make the either the black or the white bits rise to the top of the bead, and have the other sink to the bottom, thus changing the apparent colour of the beads. The neat thing is that, in theory, they can be put into a liquid, and essentially spray-painted over any conceivable surface.

Now, of course, if you want to display pictures that actually change and move, the e-ink will have to be printed between an array of control electrodes that handle the business of charging the beads, however, e-ink doesn't require any power to retain an image once it's been created. This means enormous power savings for most computer applications, since, most of the time, most computers sit for seconds at a stretch without changing their display much at all. Also, as the pigments used inside the beads are more or less the same used for conventional inks, e-ink has the readability of actual paper. It's also screamingly easy to scale up the displays to, say, billboard sizes - especially compared to other current technologies.



The Bond Villain's Choice: Plasma Screen

■ If you're looking for the sort of display that you can mount behind your desk, and say, with a sweeping gesture such things as: "So, as you can see, Mr Bond, soon my satellites will converge over the Eiffel Tower, and cripple the world baguette economy", then the plasma screen is for you. Of all the technologies that are main contenders, it's the easiest to make big, thin and light - in fact this is both a blessing and a curse: it's easy to make them big, but hard to make them small.

The plasma screen is, in essence, a very large array of very small fluorescent lights, arranged in a grid - a whole bunch of little independent squares full of gas that, when zapped sufficiently, will glow. Now, fluorescent lights are great, especially if you want your illumination choice to make you look like a recent corpse, however they have

three problems that the plasma screen inherits: they take a little while to turn on, you can't really dim them very well, as you can with incandescent lights, and they give out relatively quickly - around 10000 hours of operating time. (Which is around five years of workplace usage.)

Displaying moving pictures means being in the business of varying the light levels on each pixel fairly much all the time - as such the plasma screen needs to leave all it's pixels slightly on all the time, to avoid the characteristic fluoro-tube warm-up period. Combine this with the fact that fluoro-tubes are hard to dim, and you end up with a display that has trouble displaying a large number of shades of colour: particularly dark colours and blacks, which look all stripy and flickery.

Now, on it's side the plasma screen has little in the way of viewing angle restrictions, as the display elements

themselves emit light. Also, they're comparatively easy to make - you don't need a semiconductor-grade clean-room, as with, say LCDs. There have also been some recent advances in making them handle a wider range of colours, and better response on low brightness images, by interleaving the electrodes that keep the cells "awake" behind the cells themselves. The difficulty is that there seem to be certain physical limits on exactly how small a single pixel can be manufactured, and still light up - the limit seems to be about 0.3mm. This means that plasma screens that are wall sized, rather than monitor sized seems to be the norm for the long term. Not that it wouldn't be nice to have a wall sized monitor, of course, but you'll need a Bond-villain sized budget for that too.





MARKET FORCES AND DIGITAL TELEVISION.

So, now that we've got some clue as to which technologies are on the block, so to speak, where is the future likely to take us? If the fact that we've all got inferior VHS video recorders and DVD players with region coding teaches us anything, it's that market forces often have far more say in the evolution of technological solutions than actual end-user quality concerns. This, of course, sucks large, but it's the historical fact of the matter. What we need is some sort of pressing new market arena in which all the different bits and pieces can fight for dominance in a display technology gladiatorial arena type thingy. But where might we find such a relatively level field? Oh, hang-on, what about Digital TV? Digital television in Australia has been lurking about as a concept for some time now - it promises better reception, and the ability to transmit different qualities of broadcast: standard, and high definition. Now standard broadcasts, are designed to work with your common or garden telly, however to see new, neat, high-definition ones, you'll need a new and better quality of screen - one that can handle high resolution. What better chance to get everyone buying new, flat-panel monitors, and thus bring the price of them down for the people who really matter - geeks who have been coveting Trek-style flat panel monitors for years. But will it work? Does the average Australian actually care enough about new fancier TV, to open up the market? Only time will tell.

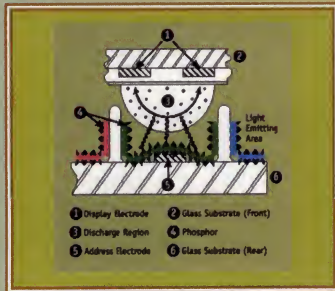
The Winner!

Looking at the trends, both in technology and the marketplace, for your desktop monitor, over the next few years the technology to lust after will still probably be LCD - after all their prices have been continuing to drop to levels where mere mortals might venture. If OLEDs suddenly come good, and receive the financial and corporate backing they seem to be starting to garner, this might change - and it'd certainly be a change for the better. They're clearly the pick of the bunch, it's just I wouldn't exactly hold my breath waiting for the sweeping change brought on by a new technology.

Wall sized displays are another matter, though, since all the major competitors have particular failings. Plasma is expensive, and wears out, and current projectors are noisy and a bit awkward to set up. Things could go

either way - or perhaps E-Ink will come good and increase the road-toll no end with animated roadside billboards.

Things move by increments in the computer industry, these days - the market is massive, that there's a lot of inertia to shove around. We'll just have to wait patiently and see.



CD Writer Roundup

Daniel Wilks burns down the world with six of the latest

IOMEGA PREDATOR 8x4x32 Firewire External CD-RW

Distributor: Iomega
Price: \$755
URL: www.iomega.com.au

A damn sexy beast, the Iomega Predator Firewire CD-RW has performance to back up its sleek good looks. Inside the slimline silver and blue chassis beats the heart of a true beast which delivers excellent speed – for an external device. Compared to internal CD-RW drives, the Predator slinks away (to continue the animal metaphor), easily being beaten in speed and price by most modern drives. As an external drive, however, the Predator smokes a good deal of the competition.

With a straight CD-R write speed of around 988kb per second, the Predator is fast for an 8x burner and performs equally admirably as a CD-RW at roughly half that speed. As a straight reader, the Predator is good and fast for an external device, using the speed of Firewire well. Probably the best features of the drive are its small footprint, excellent CD bundle and ease of installation. The drive is small and light weight, making it very portable, allowing it to be used over a number of machines with a lack of fuss (assuming that all of the machines have Firewire ports that is) and installation is simply a matter of plugging the drive in and letting the PC do the rest. The software bundle is very easy to use so you should be off and burning in no time. The downside? The Predator Firewire is hellishly expensive, almost three times the price of most other drives. Definitely something to think about.



SCORE

A very good external drive but the price leaves it wallowing.

77

IOMEGA ZipCD External 16x10x40 USB 2.0

Distributor: Iomega
Price: \$549
URL: www.iomega.com.au

If you have a USB 2.0 connection and are looking for an external burner, this is the drive you have been waiting for – fast, quiet and good looking. Through USB 2.0 the ZipCD can and will deliver a staggering 16x10x40 burn/read rate, comparable to modern internal burners. Unfortunately, if you are not one of those people with access to USB 2.0, instead relying on the standard USB 1.1 you can only get a maximum performance of 4x4x6. Not at all good.

The drive is quite bulky considering the size of the other Iomega entry into this month's roundup but it is not an eyesore. As pointed out by another member of staff (who shall remain nameless) the drive looks like a pair of binoculars from Star Wars. It has all of the plug and play accessibility that we have come to expect from a USB device, so installation offers up no hassles what so ever. Once again Iomega has given us an excellent and easy to use software bundle, but unfortunately the pros do not outweigh the cons at this stage of the drive's life. When USB 2.0 becomes the standard, this little baby will go through the roof, setting the standard for external burners, until that time, however, it will remain a novelty for people with cutting edge computers and the money to spare.



SCORE

Unfortunately ahead of its time.

70

SONY 24x10x40 CD-RW with Memory Stick

Distributor: Sony
Price: \$399
URL: www.sony.com.au

The new CD-RW drive from Sony is a strange duck, featuring a Memory Stick reader instead of the standard headphone jack and volume control. Whilst it may look a little odd, the reader is definitely useful to people who utilise the unique Memory Sticks for Sony appliances, such as digital cameras or MP3 players, as it gives users the ability to move files straight from the stick to the HDD or CD without the use of a docking station or the like.

As a straight CD reader, the drive works very well, reading everything you can throw at it at 40x, including CD-RW, a format notorious for being a little slow. As a burner it doesn't fare quite as well, coming in at the lower range for a 24x CD-R, though you can still burn an entire CD in around 4 minutes. The CD-RW works well writing but takes quite a while to erase, frequently getting up to maximum spin and then inexplicably slowing down again before beginning to erase. Installation is a bit fiddly as it has to be put on the secondary IDE chain for the Memory Stick reader to operate. Aside from that little quibble the drive is excellent with a software bundle to match with different suites to deal with music, video, photos or what have you. If you use Memory Stick you want one of these, otherwise one of the less advanced (and pricey) Sony units should suffice.



SCORE

An excellent CD-RW with an added bonus for Memory Stick users

85

MITSUBISHI
**Diamond Data
16x10x40 CD-RW**

Distributor: Mitsubishi Electric
Price: \$220
URL: www.mitsubishi-electric.com.au

No frills but very classy is how we sum up the Diamond Data 16x10x40 CD-RW drive. With a maximum burn speed of 16x, the DD161040 as the drive is known is significantly slower than some of its competitors, but much like a diesel engine this burner is unstoppable and contains all of the grunt you need. The DD161040 is quite plain in appearance with no more decoration than the Diamond Data diamond on the face plate. As we all know, you shouldn't judge a book by its cover.

Aided by the excellent Nero 5.5 CD authoring suite, the Diamond Data 16x10x40, whilst not being the fastest burner in the bunch still manages to crank out some excellent performance, managing to burn a full CD in under 5 minutes. CD-RW performance was slightly lacklustre, not really working up to full speed. Excellent buffer underrun protection also help out in a big way, preventing the vast majority of burn errors due to data flow problems. One really nice touch in the software bundle is the fact that the device drivers are on disk rather than CD. It may seem a bit retro but it allows for easy install, especially if you have no other CD drive.

For sheer output the DD161040 is a winner. It may not be the fastest drive in the bunch but it performs very well within its specifications and is really difficult to fault. The \$220 price tag also doesn't hurt.



SCORE

It may not be the fastest drive but it's got a lot of grunt. And it's cheap!

90

TDK
**VeloCD 24x10x40
Firewire CD-RW**

Distributor: TDK
Price: \$699
URL: www.tdk.com.au

The 24x10x40 Firewire CD-RW from TDK looks great perched on top of your computer with a good low profile and its shiny blue/grey chassis. As we all know, shiny things work better and the VeloCD Firewire drive is no exception, capable of burning CDs at 24x - damn fast for an external drive. With speeds comparable to top end internal drives the VeloCD is certainly a workhorse, unfortunately a number of small factors hold it back from being truly exceptional.

The drive's speed is due to the Firewire connectivity of the device. A good Firewire card will cost around \$120, so if your computer doesn't already have a Firewire port the necessity of buying one will add another hefty slug to the already large price tag. The drive also runs very hot, around 50 degrees. Other drives may run at comparable temperatures but the VeloCD is the only one tested that managed to heat up the room. It may sound like a petty gripe but added heat is not something you want in or on your PC. Whilst the software bundle is quite small the range of programs is decent and will have you up and burning in no time flat. The device functioned well throughout testing, working on a wide range of media at equal speeds, so there's no hassles with performance.

Although it may be easy to connect and fast to burn, the hefty price tag and excess heat of the burner hold it back from being a must have.



SCORE

If it wasn't so expensive it would be great.

79

TDK
**VeloCD 32x10x40
CD-RW**

Distributor: TDK
Price: \$399
URL: www.tdk.com.au

If it had legs you could easily say that the VeloCD32x10x40 is the fastest thing on two legs. The lack of any legs does kind of preclude such a statement but the fact remains that the VeloCD 32x10x40 is screamingly fast. It's good to see that with the advent of DVD burners that companies are still churning out faster and faster CD-RW drives. The drive itself looks very swanky with an electric blue plastic tray making it stand out from the crowd. In this month's roundup the TDK VeloCD 32x10x40 comes at the top of the heap for outright speed. It's really fast. Unfortunately the sheer speed of the burn brings its own problems.

Installation is good and easy and the software bundle is easy to use, allowing for simple drag and drop CD-R backups. The 32x burner is a little bit on the troublesome side. During testing with media other than the specified TDK 32x CD-Rs the burners wrote more errors than any other drive tested. The errors were not catastrophic or that common but are definitely worth a mention. At the moment the VeloCD 32x10x40 shows amazing speed but the lack of reliability hampers it somewhat. With a little tweaking of the drivers the burner will be an excellent addition to any computer.



SCORE

With a bit of work the VeloCD 32x10x40 will be excellent, right now it's merely good.

87

PERIPHERALS PLUS Centra R31

DISTRIBUTOR

Peripherals Plus

PRICE

\$3395

URL

www.perplus.com.au

To start the review on the right note, the Peripherals Plus Centra R31 is a bit of a beast, scoring a very solid and incredibly fast 6500 3D Marks in 3D Mark 2001, making it more than powerful enough to play any game you might want to put on it. Packaged up all nice and neat in a sexy In-Win ATX case, the Centra contains all you need to play all of your favourite games whilst still leaving ample room to upgrade and remain the envy of all your friends.

Built around a fast and stable Asus A7V266E motherboard and super-fast Athlon XP 2000+ CPU with 256Mb DDR RAM, the Centra performed fantastically throughout benchmarking, ranging from the impressive 3D Mark score to seeing if we could make it crash by acting like cavemen and just stabbing random buttons. Nothing fazed it. Graphics processing is taken care of by a fast Leadtek GeForce3 Ti200. I can already see a few of you out there groaning that it's not a Ti500 card but never you worry, the Ti200 card is the best bang for your buck bar none, it's only a little slower than a Ti500 and only about 2/3 the price. The card also comes with TV Out so you can link the machine up to your telly and watch your favourite DVDs.

All data is stored on a good solid 40Gb Seagate Barracuda HDD and input is taken care of by either a

16x Sony DVD ROM or a Sony 24x10x40 CD-RW, just the thing for making those valuable "off site backups". Also includes is a tres retro 3.5" Floppy, just in case Windows crashes and you need to boot from floppy. The keyboard and mouse are good and comfortable so you can click away at WASD until the cows come home.

Although the machine does not contain a sound card, the motherboard features onboard C-Media 6 channel sound, which craps all over standard AC'97 sound in a big way. This onboard sound combined with the excellent Altec Lansing speakers perform more than admirably, though if you are a sound buff you may want to put in a sound card at a later stage. The only other area in which the system really falters is the monitor. The Samsung Synchmaster Dyna Flat is a great monitor to be sure, delivering a very crisp and clear image. The problem? Well, it's only 17", a little on the small side for this day and age. It would be nice to have a 19" monitor with this machine.

All in all the Centra is an excellent gaming machine featuring all the power you need to do whatever you want. Whatever flaws there are in the specs, such as the lack of a sound card and a smallish monitor can be easily fixed in the future with a little injection of cash. After impressing us no end with their \$1500 Challenge entrant, Peripherals Plus have done it again with an excellent gaming platform.

SYSTEM SPECIFICATIONS

In-Win IWS-506 ATX Midi Tower Case with 2 Front USB (300W)
AMD Athlon Fan/Heatsink Approved To 2000+
AMD Athlon XP 2000+ Processor (1.67Ghz)
Asus A7V266E AMD Motherboard (DDR)
256MBPC2100 184 Pin DDR SDRAM
1.44MB 3.5" Floppy Disk Drive
SONY 16X DVD Drive
SONY 40x24x10 With Burn Proof IDE CDRW Kit
Seagate Barracuda IV 40GB 7200rpm HDD
Leadtek GeForce 3 Titanium 200
Dynamalink Smart 56K V.90 Modem
Peripherals Plus Mouse Mat (yay! - Ed)
MS WINDOWS XP Home
Peripherals Plus Multimedia Keyboard (PS/2)
Peripherals Plus Microsoft Wheel Mouse
Altec Lansing AVS500 - 5 Piece speaker system
Samsung 753DF 17" Monitor
3 Year Limited On-site Hardware Warranty

SCORE

An excellent gaming machine
with heaps of upgrade potential.

92



THRUSTMASTER

Firestorm Wireless Gamepad

DISTRIBUTOR

Thrustmaster

PRICE

\$79.95

URL

<http://au.thrustmaster.com>

With 12 programmable buttons, two analogue sticks and an 8 way D-pad the Firestorm Wireless gamepad from Thrustmaster is just like the normal Firestorm gamepad but, as the name suggests, without any wires. Gamers have been leery of wireless pads for a while due to some input problems caused by the receiver. In the past a good number of wireless devices have had serious lag time between input and action or some random input caused by radio interference. The Firestorm Wireless issues in a new era of response and freedom, making it a great peripheral.

Installation is simple using all of the connectivity expected of a USB device and the Thrustmapper 3 program allows for excellent customisation. Though the box claims that the controller has a range of around 5 metres this was not the case. The gamepad functioned well up to about the 2 metre range and then became unstable. Up to the 2 metre range the gamepad performed fantastically, doing what we told it to time and time again without having to point it directly at the receiver or fiddle in any way, shape or form.

The pad itself is very comfortable, melting into the hand and giving good access to the majority of buttons,

though, like on the normal Firestorm pad, buttons 9 and 10 are a little fiddly to use. It also looks great so you'll have no problems showing it off to your friends. Overall the Firestorm Wireless is a truly excellent gamepad delivering fast response times, comfort and great looks. It's unfortunate that the pad didn't quite live up to the hype and work up to 5 metres away from the receiver but all that really means is that you have to get out of bed to play games. Oh well.



SCORE

Thrustmaster have done it again with another great pad.

91

TDK

Tremor 150w multimedia speakers

DISTRIBUTOR

TDK

PRICE

\$249

URL

www.tdk.com.au

Right out of the box the TDK Tremor S150 speakers have the ability to kick all other 2.1 multimedia speaker systems in the balls, metaphorically speaking of course. The first thing you'll notice is how great the speakers look with a combination of sleek, slimline satellites (ooh alliteration) and a hefty cylindrical sub featuring a huge fat aluminium heatsink. Once you plug them in the speakers only get better, delivering performance that outranks some 4.1 speaker setups. The sound is huge and clear with a sweet spot that seems to encompass the entire room - no matter where you are sitting or standing it sounds like you're just in front of the speakers. They could even make AC'97 sound good.

Setup is an absolute breeze necessitating only a few cords being plugged in. The entire process shouldn't take more than 5 minutes tops. The two satellites churn out a surprising amount of noise for something so slim and have no problems whatsoever dealing with extremes of pitch or volume, showing no

distortion no matter what you throw at (or through) them. Likewise the sub is very powerful and delivers some wonderfully deep bass, rivalling many of the lower end 4.1 systems. Handy brackets are included in the box if you have a hankering to mount the satellites on the wall.

Though they are quite pricey for a 2.1 speaker setup, the performance they give more than makes up for the deficit they'll leave in your pocket. For the true audio

aficionado the Tremor setup will probably not be enough, but for gaming purposes it would be hard to do better without shelling out the big bucks for a home cinema quality 5.1 system with built in Dolby decoding and the like.



SCORE

Speakers so good they kick other 2.1 setups in the balls (or at least, the cones - Ed)

94

CHANTECH

9BJD0 MainBoard

DISTRIBUTOR

Altech

PRICE

\$300

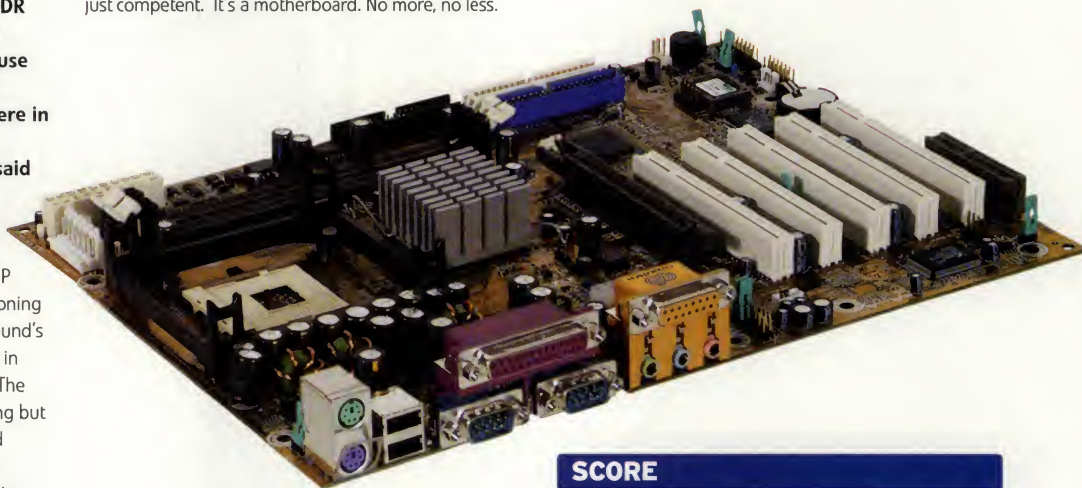
URL

www.altech.com.au

It's difficult to review the Chaintech 9BJD0 for one main reason - it's incredibly average with nothing to really make it stand out from the rest of the P4 motherboard market. Based around the Intel 845 chipset, the 9BJD0 features a 100-132MHz FSB, 2 DDR DIMMS, 5 PCI slots, 1 AGP slot and 1 totally redundant CNR slot. Does anyone actually use the Communication Network Riser slot for anything? If anyone does can you let us here in the PCPP bunker know? We'd be really interested. Sorry about the aside, but as I said before, the 9BJD0 is really average.

The only real interesting feature of the board is the inclusion of CMedia's 6-channel DSP instead of the usual AC'97 codec for sound. The DSP allows users to still have 4.1 or 5.1 speakers functioning properly without the need of a sound card. The sound's not too bad, leaving AC'97 for dead but still paling in comparison to any of the 6 channel sound cards. The inclusion of only two DDR DIMMS is a little annoying but not too fatal overall. Throughout testing the board coped well, maintaining stability throughout and keeping up a decent speed, though nothing to write home about. Overclocking may prove to be a bit of a problem as none of the core voltages are configurable.

If you're only looking for a motherboard which will run within its specs and do nothing else then the Chaintech 9BJD0 is the one you want. It's not hugely fast, it's reliable and it contains all of the basic features you could want. The 9BJD0 is neither good nor bad, rather just competent. It's a motherboard. No more, no less.



SCORE

The Chaintech 9BJD0 is a motherboard. Thank you and goodnight

75

TYAN

Trinity 510 high performance System Board

DISTRIBUTOR

Altech

PRICE

\$214

URL

www.altech.com.au

If you have all of the parts and want to put together an economic, functional and very reliable Intel PC you could do a lot worse than the Tyan Trinity 510. Very paired down from the typical VIA P4x266 OEM board, the Trinity 510 has no on board sound, 5 PCI slots, 1 AGP slot and 4 DDR DIMMS. Performance wise the Trinity 510 is good, delivering excellent speed and reliability throughout testing. Unfortunately all is not well in the state of Denmark. The Trinity has a few flaws which can seriously hamper performance if they're not taken care of.

There are a few major mistakes in the short instruction manual which need to be addressed. The DDR DIMMS are numbered backwards for a start, the manual calling slot 4 slot 1 and so on. Using the DIMMS out of sync can cause some serious system instability or a failure to register the RAM at all. It's an easy mistake to rectify but can cause all sorts of problems if not pointed out. The manual also makes reference to a number of jumpers which are not actually on the board. That's not really a problem but it can lead to some confusion. The forth DDR DIMM proved to be little unreliable but a flash of the BIOS should fix that right up.

When everything is taken into account the Tyan

Trinity 510 is a very decent if somewhat bare bones P4 motherboard. It's fast, cheap and incredibly reliable. The only thing standing in the way of its success is the terrible manual. Whilst the manual is not going to cause any catastrophic failures it will cause some problems for people trying to build their first PC so be warned. It may not do a lot but for the price it does its job well.



SCORE

A competent if somewhat plain P4 board.

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X - MICRO

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Impact5 T200 & T500



- Chipset Geforce3 Ti 200 / Geforce3 Ti 500
- Core Clock 175MHz / 250MHz
- Memory Speed 446MHz / 500MHz
- Memory Speed 4 nS / 3.8 nS
- Memory Bandwidth 7.14GB / 8GB
- Triangle per sec. 29 Million / 40 Million

Impact4 Titanium



- Chipset Geforce2 Ti
- Core Clock 250MHz
- Memory Speed 446MHz
- Memory Speed 4nS
- Memory Bandwidth 7.14GB
- Triangle per sec. 31 Million

Hulk5 200 & 400



- Chipset Geforce 2 MX 400
- Core Clock 200MHz
- Memory Speed 183MHz
- Memory Bandwidth 2.7GB
- Triangle per sec. 25 Million
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 the world's fastest and most powerful
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SETUP

Q & A

NATHANAEL JEANNERET SHARES HIS WISDOM

Fun with Runtime

Q I have been having quite a few problems recently. This is the second time I have had to type this, as my computer just came up with the blue screen of death and reset itself. It does this on a regular basis during games, browsing the Internet, starting programs and doing just about anything you can think of, it is very annoying. Secondly, whenever I save on Black & White it comes up with an error message. Along the top it says "Microsoft Visual C++ Runtime Library" and in the box it says "Runtime error! Program D:\Games\Black & White\Runblack.exe abnormal program termination" and when I click ok it quits. This has happened before and we took it back to be fixed. When we got it back it worked fine but now it's back.

Lee

A The runtimes for your computer can be found on your Windows install CD, although sometimes it's easier to start afresh. I would hazard that its time for a clean install of Windows, its not the quickest solution, but at times like these it is often the best. Before you press "the big red button" do make sure you have all the latest software updates and all your crucial data backed up. In the process of getting software in readiness for your clean install, you may well iron out the gremlin that's causing you all the grief!

Dangnabbit! All in one mobo!

Q I'm looking to upgrade my motherboard and possibly, CPU. I currently have a Duron 800 with 256mb ram, GeForce2MX, Hercules MuseXL, and a PC chip-M810 LMR motherboard. This motherboard is rather dodgy, as it has a video card, sound card and modem built in and my performance is lacking (Sorry to hear that! -Nathanael) and I'm not sure if I can overclock my CPU with this motherboard. The modem is very slow for a 56k modem, and will have to buy a new one as well. Would it be better off buying a new motherboard now with a modem, and overclocking my Duron 800 to say 900-1000mhz, or waiting a bit and saving up for a motherboard/CPU upgrade in the future and get an Athlon XP? Would I be better waiting a bit longer for prices to drop and saving for the combo, or getting a quality motherboard now and keep my Duron 800?

Ryan

A Yes indeed, you have a motherboard that was not designed for overclocking, but we all know the evils on all-in-one-motherboards. Basically, you are not going to save a whole lot of money by investing in a PC. Inevitably you will lose money when the next latest and greatest thing comes out. That's the nature of the beast, and part of the joy of being a proud PC owner. In terms of how to upgrade, don't spend pots of money on a SDRAM system as you know the new Athlons and Pentiums don't use it at all. A good solid DDR motherboard and CPU combo should last longer, but will obviously be more expensive. If you want your upgrade to last longer then go the whole hog and go to the DDR Athlon.

Glitchy OpenGL

Q I have a bad problem. When running Deus Ex on Direct 3D, I seem to have a delay problem. If I move my mouse or press forward, it won't respond straight away. I've got the latest drivers for my GeForce2 MX 100/200 off the Internet and Direct X off of your cover disc. If I try using OpenGL, some models and objects are weird, e.g. sometimes a white box, or a weapon in the slot at the bottom of the screen might have a purple background. I downloaded the latest OpenGL update, but it says it can't update my GeForce 2. I can't play Deus Ex and I'm sure you can sympathise.

NeoNova

A Solving this is simplicity itself; get the patch. Head over to www.deusex.com or www.planetdeusex.com and get downloading. It should remove all of these problems. If only all technical questions could be so easy!

She is crazy, the Internet!

Q Every time I surf the web, I get a whole bunch of X's where the pictures are supposed to be. I've tried to adjust the security settings in IE with no success. I downloaded IE6 but still no good. Can you please tell me what I'm doing wrong. This problem has plagued me for years and I'm just a little pissed about it.

BerZerk

A You're going to laugh, no really... Just go to the Tools menu in IE, then Internet options, then the "Advanced" tab. Scroll down to the multimedia section and put a tick in the box that is next to Show Pictures.

BX Bios Upgrade?

Q I recently bought a Seagate Barracuda IV 40gig Ultra ATA/100 hard-drive and I am having trouble installing it. The problem occurs due to my Award Modular Bios v4.51 which won't recognise HDDs above 33.8gig during the Power On Self-Test. I have tried to install it as both master and slave via the various installation software that is available from Seagate (DiscWizard/Disk Manager etc.). There is a way to overcome this using a dynamic drive overlay? I followed the instructions given which allowed me to initially format the drive, but after that I still can't get the bios to recognise the drive. My options are a bios upgrade, or a motherboard upgrade, though financial restrictions limit the latter. How do I upgrade my bios, or, if that is not a good option, what is a good option for the motherboard upgrade. And, what possible problems may occur with a motherboard upgrade?

Graeme

A For anyone that is curious, Dynamic Drive overlay is one of Seagate's little tricks for making a computer fully utilize a larger HDD than the BIOS can naturally see. This is a program that lets older BIOS's see larger hard drives. Some bios have an 8GB limit and can't see more than that of say 10GB drive. The overlay fools the bios and then lets it see all the drive.

To get everything happening you simply need to download the latest version of DiscWizard from <http://www.seagate.com/support/disc/drivers/discwiz.html> and follow the instructions there. Upgrading a motherboard can be a very tricky thing, the major thing to be aware of is that you will have to re-install Windows, as too many system critical drivers and so on are installed at the very first install. Other than that? Prepare for some scraped knuckles and have all your tools nearby, and you should be fine!

How hot is hot?

Q I have a question about my AMD Duron 700 processor. What is the maximum temperature it can handle? The temperature has only ever gone as high as 58°. I have a document from the AMD website that states the maximum temperature of processor die as 90°. And it also states that the processor should not be subjected to conditions above 100°, which I hope the temperature will never reach. The hot Australian weather also adds a few degrees to the temperature, which doesn't help matters much.

Richard

A A lot of AMD owners are concerned by how hot their CPUs run, and it's a good idea to know roughly what temperature your CPU runs at. As AMD themselves state any temperature above 100° is a no-go and you certainly don't want your PC running anywhere near that temperature, and if it is, I suggest you either get a new CPU or a frying pan and cook some eggs on that baby! But for day to day running, you should expect temperatures of around 40° to 60°. It also depends on how effective your CPU cooler is, what the ambient temperature is, and whether you have a window and [337 neon light in your case.

This PC was born under a bad sign

Q I was wondering if you could help me understand a strange behaviour that my computer has been exhibiting (for quite some time now). Its an Athlon 1ghz on an A7V motherboard (the one that supports 133 RAM but not 133 bus), in an AOpen case (forget the type: HJ-something? it was definitely rated for Athlon though). It was bought almost a year ago, last December. Anyway, my PC has, for the majority of this time, been very stubborn when turning on. I.e., if I turn my PC off, and leave it plugged in, then after about 10 minutes, try and turn it back on, nothing happens. Everything is silent and dead. Now, to get around this problem, what I do is unplug it from the power in the wall for a seemingly random length of time (10 minutes) Then I plug it in again, hopefully seeing a spark. If I turn it on straight away, everything powers up fine and away it goes. Now this is quite a weird problem and I guess I should've looked into it much earlier, but I guess I didn't really care, because I turn my PC on once in the morning and then when I turn it off at night I simply unplug it. In the morning I plug it in and away it goes again. However recently sometimes it doesn't even turn on in the morning, which is scary! I have to leave it for another 30 minutes or more and plug it into a different power point sometimes! I've updated to the latest BIOS each time as a new one came out for the A7V (in fact, I have a feeling that when I first built it didn't exhibit this behaviour, but then Asus changed something. Initially the motherboard had power running through it whenever it was plugged in, but apparently this led to people getting electric shocks (?) so they changed this system in a bios upgrade. My memory is foggy, but this MAY have been when it started. Anyway, have you ever heard of such a problem in the past? What could possible causes to the problem be? I'm guessing it could be either Power Supply unit or....

the motherboard (which I dearly hope it isn't because that would be a pain in the ass to replace).... It would be really good however if you had heard of this problem before and could tell me the solution straight off so I could get round to doing it.

Chris

A Okay its more than likely that your problem lies in you power supply, most AOpen cases are equipped with AMD compliant power supplies, but sometimes these things happen. By looking at the revision history of the available A7V BIOS flashes there have been a few changes to the way in which this motherboard handles power, one memorable revision fixed shutdown issues, but also had the annoying legacy of leaving the HDD activity light on ALL the time! Those wacky folks around at ASUS huh?

Your best bet would be to borrow a PSU off a mate and connect it up without taking out your old one. I have replaced many a PSU, and just in case it isn't the PSU's fault, it's better just to try it out quickly without going to the trouble of disconnecting your existing one. If it is your power supply, expect to pay around \$100 for a decent quality replacement.

Video Cardage

Q I have a P3 800 with three hundred and something megs of ram, a cheapo motherboard, 15" monitor and a TNT2 32MB. I want to upgrade it, and I think getting a better video card is a good cheap option, instead of getting an Athlon. Anyway, for a while I have been excited about the Hercules 3D prophet 4500 64mb after you guys reviewed it a while ago. I was wondering if this is a wise choice or will my system not be worth spending as much on? Also, it says it needs a "AGP 2.0 compliant" AGP slot? Am I right to assume that this means the same as a 2x AGP?

Fletcher-Costins

A Not quite, the AGP 2.0 Specification actually means a 4X AGP slot. The card will still actually work, but obviously not at its full-intended speed. If you are putting this as a cheap upgrade in an older system then don't let all this worry you too much, you should still get a decent boost in performance, and you can always take this card into your next PC. In your case, it should certainly be worth the trouble to upgrade, the processor you have and this Video card are matched pretty well.



LETTER of the month

Modems-R-US

Q I have a P3800 and a gigabyte mainboard. I got my PC about a year ago, and ever since I've got it I have had this problem. It turns itself on! That's right, if left turned off, with power point on it will turn itself back on at seemingly random times. To solve this I just switch off the power point too. About a week ago I formatted my hard drive using the very helpful tips you had in issue #66 (great stuff by the way) for a totally unrelated issue of a funky modem, but I'll get to that later. Anyhow, after the format, my PC still likes turning itself on when it wishes. The lights just flash on and it boots up to Windows desktop. I've buggered around with power setting to no avail.

Brett

A What you have is a feature called WOL (Wake on LAN) which automatically detects incoming signal into your phone line, when your phone rings on the same line as the one your PC is connected to. The PC says to itself, "Hey! Someone's trying to dial into this PC I better turn myself on!" And thus your PC appears to boot by itself. The way to stop the PC from exhibiting this behaviour is to turn off the WOL option in the BIOS. More often than not, you will have a list of conditions that will turn your PC on, things like a certain key press on the keyboard or in your case, dialling down your phone line. This feature only works in ATX equipped PCs as they are always have a little bit of power going through them, unlike the older AT systems which simply are either on or off.

SETUP

Q & A

NATHANAEL JEANNERET SHARES HIS WISDOM

XP Shutdown Problems

Q I have a problem with Windows XP while I'm trying to shutdown. When I choose to shutdown it says "Shutting down Windows" then my computer restarts itself. It never used to do this until I put on new drivers for my SoundBlaster Live value. I have an Athlon 1.1ghz, 256mg RAM, MSI motherboard, GeForce 2 Ultra and a Sound Blaster Live Value and running on Windows XP (obviously). But otherwise Windows XP is bloody Awesome !!!! and FAST !!!!

Steven

A What you need to do is uninstall the Sound Blaster drivers and wait until a newer version is released. Often with early releases of driver support they are not totally bug free and it takes a little time for these to be worked out. Windows XP does have in built support for the Live, which should cover you until they release a revision. I have checked the SoundBlaster website at the time of writing and at the moment there doesn't appear to be any information regarding your problem. Creative Europe host an online chat on their website which you may be able to get more information from; www.europe.creative.com.

Partitions are fun!

Q Ok I have two problems, the first one is my dad set up Windows 98 so that the C: drive only has 1.95 GB, then he made the D: drive 45.5 GB (the DVD drive is the F drive and the CD writer is the G drive). So can I swap the order around or even it out? Or put the D: drive as the first drive? I'm thinking of getting Windows XP and I don't know if I will be able to install it because of the problem with the C drive, and will I have to reinstall every thing if I can install XP?

Vlad

A In some AWARD BIOS's you can change the boot drive to be the D: or the E: drive, which is fortunate if you have a motherboard which allows this. Just take a look in the BIOS and see if you have the option to change the Boot order of your drives. In Windows you can change the order which drives load. But only if they are not partitions of the main drive, as is your case. The best way to deal with this is to flatten the partitions by using the fdisk program. As the 2Gb Primary Partition is barely big enough to hold a full install of Windows XP and yes, this means you will have to reinstall everything. You use fdisk before you reformat your HDD's. Your dad obviously knows how to use it as he must have

used fdisk to create the initial partitions. These days there is no reason not to have the majority of the HDD as one partition. If you REALLY want to have partitions make them a minimum size of 8GB, unless you are dual booting with Windows 95 (In that case 2GB is the size to use).

Bugger (Edited for legal reasons)

Q Unfortunately I own a Compaq Presario 7500. After swearing at it for the last year I'm going to upgrade to a mongrel. I was looking at a motherboard for about \$170 and an el-cheapo case for around \$70-\$80, topping the bargain off with a stunning TNT2 32mb graphics card. Yes, cash is tight! Can you recommend a good motherboard with AGP for about

this price? Also I was planning on keeping the HDD, modem and C.D. drive from the Compaq, with a Creative CDRW as well, do you know if there'll be any compatibility issues with any particular boards? Your help would be seriously appreciated.

Dave

A Because of the way proprietary (IBM, Compaq, Dell etc) systems are made, they are designed almost to be throwaway PCs. This is not good for your average cash strapped gamer, so let it be known, we feel your pain. Its getting increasingly difficult to pick up a lower end Socket-370 motherboard that doesn't have in built video, which would put you in a tricky spot. A good cheap motherboard like the Abit KT7E and a budget Duron would most likely be the cheapest way to build your next Mini-Beast. You shouldn't

READER TECH TIP - MY 3D MARK SCORE SUX.

This month our faithful reader flick has compiled a checklist of things you can do to improve your 3d mark score! These were originally posted on the 3d Mark website, and flick saved them from obscurity and now we bring to you "The 3D Mark 14 Commandments!"

1. Defrag your hard disk before and after installation.
2. For 3D Mark 2000 I recommend the 7.xx and 8.xx series drivers, 7.68 and 8.03 worked best for me.
3. For 3D Mark 2001 the 12.90 drivers appear to be the most stable and fastest. (12.90 would be the best) If you are going to update your drivers make sure the old ones are completely removed.
4. Once installed, set your desktop resolution and colour depth to the same as what the test runs at, which is 1024x768 in 16-bit colour for 2000 and 32 bit colour for 2001.
5. Set your refresh rate to 60Hz.
6. Now download the Geforce Tweaker file as this enables the overclocking panel and get tweakin'.
7. Next go to display properties, click on the settings tab, click advanced, click Geforce (model name), click additional properties, make sure Anti-aliasing is disabled, under Direct3D set mipmap detail level to best performance, also make sure that "fig table emulation" and "adjust z-buffer" are ticked, all the other should be unticked. Set the PCI texture memory size to minimum as AGP cards do not require this.
8. Now click on "More" Direct3D button, set texel alignment to 7, set vertical sync mode to always off and set render no more than 3 frames ahead.
9. Now select clock setting, and enable the overclocking feature, restart the machine.
10. Clock your card to its highest known speed, bare in mind that core speed tends to give the biggest boost in 3D Mark 2001.
11. Also try downloading programmes like NVMAX, Getune and Rivatuner, as these can also offer some more tweaks for a boost.
12. Using one of the above apps or another similar utility, make sure you enable Side Band addressing as this can give around 250 more points in 3D Mark 2000, and a slight increase in 3D Mark 2001, I used Creative's AGP wizard, as I have a Creative VGA card.
13. I have also heard that if you load NVMAX, and set the LOD to +2, it can give a considerable boost, however I have not tried this tweak yet, but others have reported considerable gains.
14. Also for 3D Mark 2000, if you go to testing options, click on change, tick the disable title screens, and set to run twice, this can also give a small boost in scores. For 3D Mark 2001, just run the test twice

have any problems bringing across your old HDD and CD Drive, although I feel compelled to mention those custom cases are often a bugger to pull apart! I recommend a baseball bat, aluminium works best!

Bypass Operation

Q Considering that you can now get a hefty bit of ram for the same price as a family meal deal, I was wondering about the idea of a ram drive for programs (ok games). Theoretically this would seem like a great little bypass of the hard drive and potentially, dum-da-da-dum! A super cheap upgrade! Apparently there's been a bit of discussion on the net and there is even a program that can swap data into the ram drive on boot up and shut down, but I haven't really read anything about it. Is it a viable idea or are there those irritating problems associated with clever PC tweaking?

Pyropos

A Yes and no, generally speaking RAM drives at the moment come as PCI upgrades, which come with their own ram, and some proprietary hardware. Theoretically, the issue is getting your PC to recognise the RAM as an extra HDD. This gets more complicated in that, you would also need an OS loader which would boot the OS into memory, and also you have bottleneck issues in that, your average PC slows down because of the motherboard and interconnecting parts. It will be some time before affordable, realistic solutions for a RAM drive are available for PC. Speaking personally, I think you would do better to spend your money on a better motherboard, or another subscription to PCPP! That will definitely make your PC go faster!

2 bit dirty so and so

Q Great mag, got every copy. Just a quick query, if I convert my 16 bit FAT to 32 bit, would I still be able to go back to DOS and run 16 bit dos games, are there any backward compatibility issues? I have tried to find out from Microsoft's web site, but it's like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Also I have a hard drive that supports UDMA66, but my motherboard does not. Is there an adapter board that I could use to get the full power out of this hard drive; and where could I purchase one?

Ron

A Yes, your games should mostly work fine, the compatibility issues are mostly to do with the way Windows95 (and onwards) allocates and deals with your RAM. This isn't a guarantee, but most should work fine, just don't come knocking on our door screaming because you cannot play commander keen anymore! You can get an ATA66/100 adapter from Promise their site is www.promise.com. They have fully bootable ones that you can purchase also, so you can run your operating system disk while connected to one of these. They are available from most computer shops.

Dust bunnies Anonymous

Q I took off my PC's Case for the first time in around 9 months, a question struck me! Can super-duper mondo amounts of dust in a PC (in my case mainly around the CPU) be a hazard to my (Three and a half year old thing I like to call a) computer? I got out my dust buster and gave it a 2 1/2 minute clean, but there is still a lot of dust in there.

Madcow

A Dust is okay up until a point. It's fine and natural for your PC to accumulate a reasonable amount of dust, as a direct result of

day to day running of your PC. Of course its not just the people with the inside of their case on display who don't like a bit of dust, it can (eventually) adversely affect the running of cooling fans and also restrict air movement inside your case. This is a bad thing, and as we mentioned in tech tips last month, it's a good idea to have a can of compressed air handy to try and blow out some of the dust-bunnies and cobwebs. If you leave dust inside your PC then the most danger it poses is from restricting or stopping your CPU cooler. Most modern CPU's will last about five to ten minutes without a cooling fan, and if you don't have some sort of temperature monitoring set up then you may have to officially kiss your shiny CPU goodbye. If you cannot seem to quiet a noisy fan with just compressed air you can have a shop at putting some lubricant directly onto it. (Provided the fan has the requisite spot to put it in) If your fan has a sticker over the top of it, then it will most likely be hiding a spot which you can put a drop of oil there. Sewing machine oil or similar is good. Beyond that, most electronics shops are starting to sell replacement fans at reasonable prices, brands such as sunon are a good buy and should last some time. Other than that, try to keep your PC off the ground, and installing a fan filter (otherwise known as a cut up bit of fly screen) will help cut down on the dust demon



TECH TIP #2 HOW DO I TURN ON SHARING?

A regularly asked question is how to turn on sharing. Firstly, you need to have the networking protocols installed for your network card, this is mostly a matter of just installing the card and Windows should automatically install them. Once you have done this you need to go the following;

My Computer / Control Panels / Network / enable file and printer sharing.

Once you have done this, its simply a matter of right clicking on the folder or drive you want to share, and going to the sharing tab and choosing the option you want.

THE BEAST



THE MOST POWERFUL GAMING PC GOOD MONEY CAN BUY

The Beast has been gone for a couple of months now, but now that it's had time for a little R&R the Beast is back with a vengeance, bigger, faster and just plain grunter than ever. Built around the mighty Athlon XP 200+ this Beast leaves all previous ones for dead. Would you expect anything less?

CPU, MEMORY AND MOTHERBOARD



AMD Athlon XP 2000

So fast it can process data before you even ask, that's how fast it is, and cheap too.
\$750 www.amd.com



MSI K7T266PRO2-RU

3 months on from the review and the thing is still on top as far as AMD CPU motherboards goes. It's red, so it must go faster.
\$350 www.msicomputer.com.au



512MB Odin 300MHz RAM

What's so special about this RAM? Well, it operates at 300MHz, faster than any other DDR RAM on the market, that's what.
\$450 www.3dpower.com



Thermaltake Dragon Orb

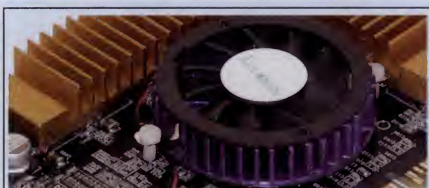
Big, thick, cold. Good.
\$48 www.techbuy.com.au

Topower 420w PSU

Gold in look, gold in performance.
\$182 www.techbuy.com.au



VIDEO SUBSYSTEM AND AUDIO



Absolute Morpheus GeForce3 Ti500

Absolute have done it again with this dead sexy Titanium 500 card. Fast and stupidly powerful, just like we like them. And it comes in a wooden box.
\$823 www.techbuy.com.au



Creative Audigy Platinum XP

Still the best, most powerful soundcard imaginable. It's going to be a while before Creative is kicked off the top of the sound card pile. \$599
www.creative.com.au



Boston Acoustics Digital Theatre 6000

Combined with the Audigy you've got yourself a high end stereo in your PC.
\$1399 www.bostonacoustics.com

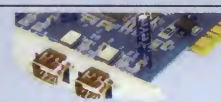


Sony MDR-F1 Headphones

The gold plated Rolls Royce of headphones, powerful, sexy and oh so comfortable.
\$649 www.sony.com.au

Hercules DV Action

Fast cheap and good for video editing.
\$199 <http://au.hercules.com>



STORAGE AND OPTICAL



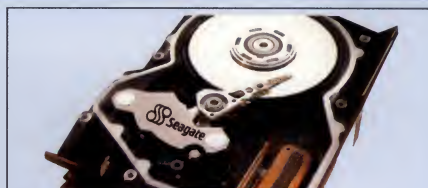
Panasonic SR-8586 B 16x DVD-ROM

Smooth and fast. It'll read DVD-RAM and play the latest new release. Good and stable and not too expensive.
\$180 www.panasonic.com.au



TDK VeloCD 32x10x40 CD-RW

It does everything and can make those valuable "off site backups" at 32x.
\$399 www.tdk.com.au



Seagate Cheetah 73LP 73 GB HDD

Hellishly expensive but at 10000 rpm the fastest big drive around. Can mean the difference between life and death in lag.
\$1980 www.seagate.com



Panasonic 3.5" Floppy

They may be retro but they're still handy.
\$25 www.gamedude.com.au

Adaptec 29160 SCSI

A good solid SCSI for a big fast HD.
\$529 www.adaptec.com





Diamondtron 2060u 22" Monitor

We reviewed it last month - it's larger than life, crisp and has a beautifully short tube.
\$2099 www.mitsubishi-electric.com.au



Lian Li PC-60 ATX Aluminium Case

So sexy it hurts. Solid, smooth and full of space. It's been on the Beast for a while and will stay for a while yet. \$396 www.anyware.com.au



Microsoft Internet Keyboard

Looks slick and can keep the WASD action going all day. A great performer for twice the price.
\$49 www.gamedude.com.au

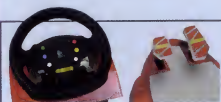


Logitech Mouseman Dual Optical

The best gaming mouse on the market bar none. So accurate it hurts.
\$99.95 www.logitech.com

Microsoft Sidewinder Force-Feedback

Great feeling stick with real bite.
\$199 www.microsoft.com



Logitech Momo Force

The swankiest racing wheel on the market bar none.
\$499 www.logitech.com



TOTAL BEAST VALUE

\$12000

LATEST ADDITION

Mitsubishi Electric Diamondtron 2060u 22" Monitor



So big it brings tears to our eyes and still manages to fit on the average desk, the Diamondtron monitor is the newest addition to the fabled Beast. Not only is the monitor the biggest thing we've seen so far, the picture is as crisp as you could ever want. The built in USB hub makes this baby the gaming holy grail - just plug your joystick into the monitor and you're off.



BEASTIE



Athlon XP 1600

So fast it you might miss it but at a price you can't ignore.
\$279

512Mb Kingston DDR RAM

Half a gig of DDR. Oh baby!
\$265



MSI K7N420 Pro

It's solid, fast supports DDR and has a built in GeForce 2. What more could you want? \$363

30Gb Seagate Barracuda Series.

Still a contender for size, stability and speed at 7200 rpm.
\$189



Sony 16x DVD ROM

Why have CD when you can have DVD?
\$129

AOpen HQ45 PRO

Sound and USB ports on face, PSU and great style combined with excellent price and ample elbow room make this on a winner. \$132



Hercules Muse XL

Cheap but certainly not nasty. Clear, loud and proud.
\$70

Samsung 753DF

17" flat and beautiful. Maybe it's not 21", but it's cheap.
\$469



Hercules XPS 210

Powerful sub and satellite speaker combo sound great and looks incredibly swanky.
\$119



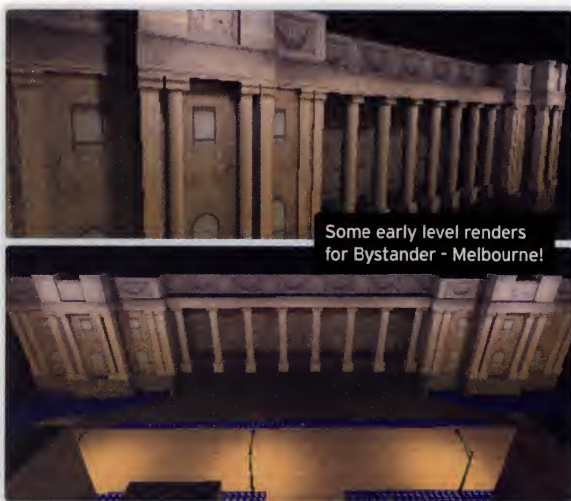
TOTAL BEASTIE VALUE

\$2000

GMAX Competition



Three months down the track and the GMAX competition is going strong with piles of design documents fighting for space on our desks with all those Thrustmaster's the Twelve Tasks of Hercules entries. But still we want more! So to whet your appetites and stir your creative juices (steady on - Ed) we've selected four very promising design documents and given them a phat write up, right here. To this rest of you, this means: get your designs in! Next month we want to print EIGHT here! And the next month SIXTEEN! And the next month (snip - Ed)



Some early level renders for Bystander - Melbourne!

Team

Team Bystander

3D Artist

Clinton Freeman

2D Artist

Michael Wiggett

Programmers

Stephen Macrae, Davide Rizzo, Ben Darcy

Bystander

This is an extremely promising mod that looks set to bring a little of that famous Hitman flavour to Quake3. Similar to a Kill the King style mod, one player is nominated as the Assassin and must attempt to kill a computer-controlled VIP character without being knocked off by bounty hunters, who are of course the other players. Once the Assassin must then escape the level without being caught. Sounds pretty standard so far, right? Wrong.

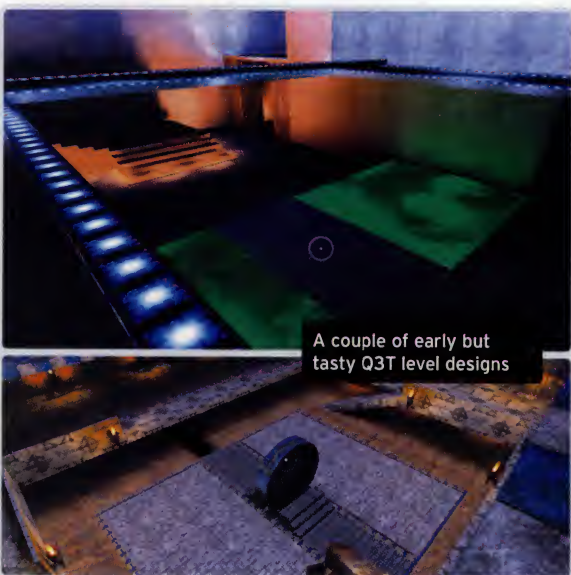
The twist with bystander is that every character is dressed in civilian clothing (except the hapless computer-controlled VIP presumably) and the level is filled with dozens of mindless civilian bots, who wander around getting in everyone's way. What this means for gameplay is that victory does not simply come to those who go in blazing; careful observation and hunting is necessary for Bounty Hunter victory, while stealth and discretion are the watchwords for the Assassin.

Team Bystander

Team Bystander are thinkers, there's no doubt; one obvious road to victory would be to simply shoot everyone, opponents and bots alike right? Wrong. Like CounterStrike, Bystander will work in rounds, with cash awarded at the end of each round for purchase of groovier weapons and equipment. If you kill bots, a fine will be deducted from your total cash pool, so the naughtier you are, the weaker you will become in subsequent rounds.

Bystander will have heaps of cool stuff, with an all-new set of realistic (and very stealthy) weapons, including knives and tasers. One particularly exciting idea is the sniper rifle; obviously this weapon is too obvious to carry around on a crowded street, so it will be possible to pack it away into a suitcase. But some of the civilian bots carry suitcases too, so who is the shooter?

Bystander is shaping up to be a lot of fun and we can't wait to get our hands on an early Beta. We'll keep you posted on the progress of this one. ■



A couple of early but tasty Q3T level designs

Team

Team Q3T

Programmers

Chris Rowe, Thomas Whithorn

Q3 Tournament

Team Q3T

One of the cleverest decisions a small modding team can make is to keep their design document simple and elegant, and this is what the two-man Q3T has done. So, is Q3T some kind of hybrid monstrosity between our beloved Quake3 and That Game Which Must Not Be Mentioned? Far from it. Q3T aims to enhance the tournament play of Quake3 with a few all-important tweaks and adjustments.

First up, who misses the blaster from Quake2? To refresh your memory, this was an unlimited-ammo short to medium range gun that fired a small burst of energy. While fragging someone by using the blaster was difficult, it made for a very different gameplay dynamic to the mindless gauntlet antics of today's Q3A.

Well Team Q3T plans to bring the blaster back to Quake3, and to this end the lads have

designed a stack of levels that make the most of this weapon. With numerous platform levels and lots of open space, these tourney maps look the business.

And for a little of that Serious Sam flavour, Team Q3T is including a whole bunch of snazzy new Egyptian textures along with a whole Stargate theme for some of the levels, which will no doubt prove much to the chagrin of Team [NoLife], below.

Okay so Quake 3 Tournament may not have the most spectacular of briefs, but it's a solid and achievable design goal and who knows, it may just add a bit of spice to that oh-so-familiar Quake3 gameplay. ■

Squad Warz

Big it up for the PCPP Community! This frankly massive team is made up from many valued and respected members of both PowerPlay website and the IRC channel on austnet.org. Their lead designer is not the Chris Taylor of Gas Powered Games, but the far more important Chris "Worms" Taylor from #PCPP. So what's Squad Warz all about?

Basically it's a variation on the Team Fortress model with team-based gameplay. Opposing teams must take certain objectives in order to win the map. There are different player classes and an ambitious seven different races to choose from.

Where Squad Warz departs from tradition is in its sense of scale. A bunch of tiny aliens have invaded Earth only to find they stand a scant few centimetres tall. Making the best of an unfortunate situation they use their amazing alien powers to, uh, bring to life a young boys set of Supa Blox (some kind of

lego-like toy with little houses, cars, people and suchforth). And so the animated Supa Blox people are sent to war, for the alien's amusement. Such is life.

If Team Supa Blox can pull this very ambitious mod off, Team Fortress Classic could have a real challenge on its hands. Each of the seven races - Knights, Pirates, Soldiers, Tribes, Town, Space and Aqua - has four player classes which correspond basically to scout, medium, heavy and special units. Knights even let you play as a dragon, and carry around another player on your back.

Vehicles will also feature, with one dedicated to each race. Seventeen levels have already been planned, including a level that's basically two speeding trains running next to each other; no prizes for guessing what happens to players who fall off. Levels also include a sinking ship, a soccer stadium, even kitchen and bedroom maps.

Can Team Supa Blox do it? ■



It's all about Supa Blox - a sort of Lego FOR MEN!

Team
Supa Blox
Design
Chris Taylor
3D Artists
Digimortal, Jono Rogers
2D Artist
Karl Kleemann
Level Design
Rhys Hocking, Paul Barry, DarkDragonlord, Garth Hendy
Sound
Rhys Hocking, Stuart Hobbs, Michael Evan Jones

Q3 Stargate

[NoLife]

Everyone loves Stargate SG1 right? Right? Okay sure, it's on at obscure times, it stars McGuyver and it's not quite interesting enough to keep me sitting there through the ads, but hell, everyone loves Stargate SG1 right? Team [NoLife] (how we like that name) loves Stargate so much it's about to dedicate a whole chunk of its time to building an SG1 mod for Quake3.

The gameplay model uses the tried 'n' tested CounterStrike system of rounds, objectives and cash rewards. It's the good old boys from the rest home versus the evil alien Goa'uld, who naturally want nothing less than to blow up the Earth. But fear not! Even if the Goa'uld DO blow up the Earth, there's always next round.

The maps will be split into two distinct sections, with an Earth-based Stargate launching room and the homeworld of the afore-mentioned evil Goa'uld. Future maps might even see the recipe inverted, with an evil

Goa'uld staging area and the corridors and gantries of the old rest home (I think he means military base - Ed).

Team [NoLife] plans to mix up the, uh, mix a little with such things as being able to pick up small rocks and other objects and throw them at people. Stargate for Q3A will also take advantage of the 3-point damage system native to the game, so the mod will be able to detect head shots, body shots, and leg shots and inflict damage accordingly. For instance, while a direct head shot means an instant kill from most weapons, a body shot will merely restrict aim, while a leg shot will eventually result in the player having to crawl around a bite people on the knees.

Stargate is shaping up to be a lot of fun with a very distinct flavour to it, so this is another mod we'll be keeping a close eye on and reporting any exciting new developments as they come to light. ■



It's going to be Stargate-tastic! What a rush!

Team
[NoLife]
Programmers
Wallop + Rodz
3D Artist
Matthew Asplin
2D Artists
Patrick Stevenson, Xr8(FUKK), Josh Hinchliffe
Level Design
Lawd, Matthew Asplin
Sound
T_A_N_K

MODLife

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GAMES

Dark Conjunction

My eyes are stuck together...

DETAILS

FOR

Quake 3 Arena

VERSION

0.9 beta

URL

www.planetquake.com/tcd/

5/5

The Dark Conjunction is a bit of a landmark as far as Quake 3 Arena mods go. Aside from being astounding beautiful, sounding great and playing really well, The Dark Conjunction maintains a distance from the rest of the pack by dint of it being the first true single player mod with an emphasis on storyline rather than on fast and furious PvP combat or team efforts. Very little detail of how the plot will progress is currently available, though the kernel of the mod is available for download so you can see what all the fuss is about. As much as we can make out about the story at the moment is that you play some type of military personnel laying his (or her) life on the line to stop fiendish creatures from bringing about the Dark Conjunction of the title.

A fusion of dark fantasy and horror, The Dark Conjunction pits humans Vs monsters in an apocalyptic battle to the end, much like last month's Cthulu Quake mod. The designers have stated that the emphasis is on realism, so you can expect to see some serious tweaking of the venerable Quake 3 engine making for

some more realistic gravity and wound effects. You can expect corpses to litter the landscape after you have carved your bloody swathe through the hordes of beasts. The mod will also feature a good deal of interaction with other characters, the terrain and vehicles. It is unknown at the moment if the vehicles will be drivable but if they are it will put a pretty big spin on the humans Vs. monsters genre.

A good deal of the plot is set to be discovered through talking to a number of NPC's beasts and other information sources dotted throughout the game, making it far more akin to action games like Half-Life or Max Payne than your run of the mill game of Quake 3. The beta release should be some time in early 2002 so there shouldn't be too many sleeps left to wait for it. If The Dark Conjunction turns out to be the revolution (and success) that it looks to be, you can expect to see a number of other single player Quake 3 mods popping up all over the net. Here's hoping. ■



A pirate's life for meee



You are falling from a great height...

Quake 3 Hunt

Be vewy vewy quiet...

DETAILS

FOR

Quake 3 Arena

VERSION

N/A

URL

www.planetquake.com/modifia/hunt/

5/5

Tiny download, big gameplay. Hunt for Quake 3 is only a 1.1Mb download but it still manages to pack more gameplay into a little space than a lot of the much bigger mods.

Basically a deathmatch mod with two different gameplay modes, Hunt offers a whole heap of new and improved weapon effects as well as some of the best mod playability out there. By and large the weapons become a good deal more useful. The humble Gauntlet now homes in on the nearest target and increases your running speed. The Lightning Gun also homes in on the nearest target and continues to dish out damage after the hit. The Grenade Launcher can be used as an excellent short term mine layer, with grenades sitting dormant for 5 seconds before exploding and when one goes boom the rest follow suit.

The main style of game in Hunt is the titular Hunt. In it the players are substantially tougher, with 300 HP a cloaking device and all the weapons. Everything regenerates, from ammo to health so it's a war to see who can find and wear the other down first. Whenever not shooting or taking damage the player is cloaked, much like the Predator, adding a new dimension to the stalk and shoot style

deathmatch. The other game style is a frantic deathmatch called Save the Universe in which the player must fight off literally hundreds of Aliens or any other bot you choose whilst simultaneously trying to grab all of the artefacts littered throughout the map before they die. It's simple and amazingly fun, so spend a few minutes giving it a download and go hunting. ■



The silly string gun had little effect

IN DEVELOPMENT

JURASSIK LIFE



Hunters Vs. Dinosaurs and corporate security is the idea behind this Half-Life mod. It's still a long way off from

finished but basically what it looks like is a teamplay mod where the players take the role of hunters looking to bag the biggest and nastiest game they can find - some bigass dinosaurs. All the favourite beasts from the movies will be included so you can expect to be battling Velociraptors, the poison spitting Dilophosaurus and everybody's favourite short armed terror, the T-Rex.

Some of the features to be included in this mod will be drivable vehicles, new equipment and an advanced enemy AI for both the dinosaurs and the security guards. Some of the new equipment will be a pair of night vision goggles, a cattle prod with which to stun the enemy and a humble packet of cigarettes that can be used as a lure for dinosaurs or a decoy for humans.

FOR: Half-Life
VERSION: N/A
URL: www.geocities.com/jphlmod

IN DEVELOPMENT

SPACE HULK



Hands up everyone out there who's ever played a miniatures war game. If you have there's a good chance that you would have either played or have some knowledge of

Space Hulk, a war/board game in which Terminators loyal to the Emperor do battle with the hideous and evil alien xenomorphs, the Genestealers. Well, a group of French modders have gotten together and are in the process of writing a Space Hulk mod for Half-Life. Purely multi-player the mod will pit two teams, the Terminators and Genestealers against each other in fast and furious deathmatch action.

Work so far looks very promising with some fantastic looking models for both the Terminators and the 'Stealers and some suitably large and deadly looking weapons including the Flamer, Autocannon, Thunder Hammer, Storm Shield and Lightning Claws. Work is about half finished so we should be able to look forward to some alien blasting action in the fairly near future.

FOR: Half-Life
VERSION: N/A
URL: //lord.napalm.free.fr/index.htm

Reaction Quake 3

For every action there's a reaction



muzzle flowers bloom



There was nowhere to go but inside.

A two-fisted mod full of 9mm male bonding, Reaction Quake 3 is a faithful and incredibly fun port of the old but undeniably revolutionary Action Quake 2 to Quake 3 Arena. Certainly a mouthful to say in a first sentence but Reaction Quake 3 is worthy of the praise, bringing all the fun and un-realism of action movies to the PC. Totally doing away with the pretence of realism in favour of an all out frag-fest, Reaction Quake 3 has a tweaked engine and a host of other features to make it a simple yet alarmingly fun shooter.

Six weapons are available to frag the opposition ranging from throwing knives to a sniper rifle with the fan favourites such as dual pistols and the shotgun falling in between. Some people may complain that there are too few weapons to make the mod really satisfying but when you consider that each weapon is generic rather than a specific weapon, 6 is all you need, especially when a single well placed shot from a pistol can kill you just as dead as the biggest gun in the game. Characters can perform a number of acrobatic (and suicidal) gun and strafe assisted jumps as well as ramp jumps to add to the flavour of the mod.

The maps are superb offering a huge degree of playability and some very appealing scenery. You can shoot it out in and around what appears to be a dilapidated Spanish mansion or on the back 9 of your favourite golf course if such takes your fancy. Reaction Quake 3 is superb in nearly every aspect making it a definite keeper for any fan of action. ■

DETAILS

FOR

Quake 3 Arena

VERSION

Beta 1.0

URL

www.reactionquake3.com/

4/5

Half-Life Heroes

Not so super-duper super-heroes



To my right, is some white space...



Weren't you in a bad film two years ago?

Superheroes are great, larger than life personas with a host of powers fit to make mere mortals like you quake in fear. Before the advent of Counter-Strike, one of the most popular mods available was Quake 2 Superheroes. It was not popular by accident, being a hugely fun game in which you could put together a Super character to run around and beat people up (or dispense justice if you're one of those good hearted truth and honour seeking types). A group of Superhero fans have gotten together and made a similar mod for Half-Life, using the venerable engine to bring the heroes to life. Unfortunately Half-Life Heroes isn't a patch on it's predecessor, turning out to be a muddled and glitch riddled mess. Messy as it may be, the mod still manages to be a bit of fun.

Instead of allowing players to create characters they are given a choice of team when entering the game, either heroes or villains, each team comprising 3 different character types. The different characters for each team are the same with different kind of cute skins. The three character types are an agile web slinger, a-la Spiderman, a

Batmanish style gadgeteer and a shapechanger who has both a human and attack form. The skins are quite sub par, looking very pixilated and jerky - a definite pity when all of the character types are fun and have at least three powers each. The balance between teams is excellent so there is no need to worry about good triumphing over evil or vice-versa unless the other players are far more 1337 than you. Another graphical downfall is the fact that the hands of each character are simple slightly altered Gordon Freeman hands, so all the character look alike whilst you play them. None of the powers affect the way you look. Very disappointing.

So far there are only a limited number of levels to play on. The ideas behind all of them are great but the execution leaves more than a little something to be desired, featuring a huge number of gravity and clipping problems along with looking pretty shoddy. The mod also has a problem with crashing, so be warned.

All in all Half-Life Heroes fails to add up to the sum of its parts. A lot of heart has gone into it but some very shoddy presentation and poor coding have made it an amateurish job at best. The good news is that this is just a beta release, so here's hoping that the next version clears up most of the problems that keep Half-Life Heroes from being great. ■

DETAILS

FOR

Half-Life

VERSION

1.1 beta

URL

<http://perso.libertysurf.fr/ambrelune/>

3/5

Starship Troopers

Would you like to know more?

DETAILS

FOR

Half-Life

VERSION

N/A

URL

//starship-troopers.
halflixpert.com/

N/A



Park Ranger attempts to calm giant bug



This is my rifle, this is my gun

OK, it must be stated for the record right now that the home page for this mod is written in French so a lot of the following information will either have been intuited from pictures or from doing French for a semester way back in year 9.

Starship Troopers is a truly classic film for a number of reasons including some very funny parodies of fascism, great special effects, the lovely Dina Meyer in the shower and reintroducing TV's Dougie Howser to a whole new generation as a leather clad psychic space Nazi with a gift for double speak and stating the bleeding obvious. Starship Troopers followed the plight of Rico's Roughnecks, a rag tag band of Marines in desperate struggle with the alien bugs. The mod takes a similar path, casting players as young Marines battling tooth and nail with the spider-like warrior bugs, enormous fire-breathing Bughemoths, flying insects and other chitinous terrors.

Due to lack of language compatibility we are unsure at this time if the mod is single or multi-player, though screenshots do strongly suggest that it will be a single player, mission based game. Graphics work so far looks absolutely superb. The Bugs look faithful to the film and move with excellent fluidity. Human figures look good if somewhat similar though this will probably change as the mod nears completion. If it plays as good as it looks, Starship Troopers should be an absolute hoot so keep your finger crossed that there will be an English version of the mod at some stage. Either that or join the Foreign Legion - they teach French for free. ■

IN DEVELOPMENT

THE WIND



It's the 1950's and you've just been framed for arson. The cops are on your tail and it's only a matter of time before they

catch you. Not only do you need to outrun the pigs, you need to track down the person who framed you to clear your name. The clock is ticking and the wind is picking up.

The Wind is a new single player mod for Half-Life currently in development which transports the player to the seedy underbelly of big city life in the 1950's. To add to the gritty noir flavour of the mod, the entire thing is in black and white which may serve to turn away some gamers at the outset. With a style which seems more concerned with stealth and investigation than shooting the crap out of everything that moves, The Wind looks set to be one of the most interesting mods to be released this year.

FOR: Half-Life
VERSION: N/A
URL: www.monstro.co.uk/index.htm

Max Payne KungFu

How (expletive) cool is that

DETAILS

FOR

Max Payne

VERSION

2.0

URL

//kungfu.maxpayne
headquarters.com/

5/5

The first big Max Payne mod has been released, and whilst it may be pretty damn simple it's just too damn cool to overlook. The long and the short of it is that Max now knows Kung Fu and can kick seven shades of crap out of anyone who dares cross his path. Actually, make that 8 shades of crap and a little bit of the red stuff too. Replacing the lead pipe and baseball bat weapon choices, the Max Payne Kung Fu mod allows Max to deliver punches, jumping/spinning kicks and some deadly staff fighting combos. He's got a whole new black leather wardrobe too.

As can be assumed, the martial arts combos are best delivered in bullet time so you can deliver the most effective moves, and also because it just looks so cool. The attacks are actually quite effective and damaging aside from looking great, so you'll frequently find yourself charging headlong towards the enemy to kick the snot out of them instead of staying back and shooting. Stick fighting is also similarly useful once you find the stick. To make things a little more balanced, some of the enemies have a modified AI, making them drop their weapons in true action movie style to go mano-e-mano with Max. Fine, it's a bit

silly, but it's really fun. Instead of just having a few moves, Max has a whole host of combos accessed through different key and mouse combinations. Strafes, jumps and mouse button clicks turn Max into a white hot ball of snarling Kung Fu frenzy.

In addition to his new Kung Fu shenanigans, Max now has a whole host of new skills including Matrix-esque wall running and flipping as well as much better bullet dodging animation. A dynamic rotating camera can show you all of the good stuff in true Matrix style so you can be sure you won't miss any of the action. As stated earlier, the mod features some new skins for Max and some of the goons as well as a modified AI, some new bullet, blood and muzzle effects and a truly swanky new animated Kung Fu intro - enough to keep the whole family happy. It's only a smallish download so there shouldn't be too many problems (if any) for modem users so jump online, start calling your friends "Grasshopper" and get ready for a butt wupping good time. ■



Two years of jazz, one of tap



<insert joke about Max's stick>

IN DEVELOPMENT

CRIME CITY



Plymouth Barracuda 1966

Crime City is a proposed new TC mod for Operation Flashpoint with aims to

cast players in the roles of cops and criminals vying for control of the city. Cops want to maintain law and order, doing their utmost to stem the tide of crime and keep everything copasetic. Criminals want to control the city through vice and the flow of drugs. As you can gather, neither team is overly fond of each other. It is not clear whether the game will be multi-player or two single player campaigns at this moment but either way sounds like a lot of fun.

Using the Flashpoint engine, Crime City will feature a whole slew of weapons and drivable vehicle to gad about town in and will have an experience point system allowing the characters to level up and progress through the ranks of either the underworld or the police. There's no real details as to when it will be released so it looks like we're in for a bit of a wait.

FOR: Operation Flashpoint
VERSION: N/A
URL: //users.pandora.be/crimecity/

A.O.E Scenarios

More biffy than you can shake a stick at



Ringin' in the sheeves, ringin in the...



Horsies and arrows are fun

Rather than look at any specific scenario in detail we have chosen to look at a choice few scenarios that are truly outstanding and add a whole new epoch to the RTS engine of Age of Empires. The powerful level editor packaged with the game gives a great deal of scope to create missions so there are no shortage available to download. These are just a few of the great ones:

The David Saga 1 and 2 follow the exploits of biblical hero David of Bethlehem in the Book of Samuel from his days as a humble shepherd to skirmishes with the Philistines, lions and to the giant Goliath, in becoming the military and civil leader of the people. David 2 follows the second book of Samuel and tells the tale of David becoming the King of Judah and his battles with the Benjamites for the crown of Israel. Both campaigns are very well structured and great fun to play with a satisfying amount of both story and combat.

Gladiator Wars casts the player as an up and coming gladiator with eyes firmly set on glory. Throughout the campaign rivals will challenge you as you slowly climb the ranks to become champion of Rome. Again this is a very fun campaign with the emphasis this time on combat rather than story.

The Chou Overlords charges the player to bring civilisation to a number of warring tribes to form a powerful Chinese Dynasty in a very challenging 6 scenario campaign.

These are but a few of the great scenarios out there. If you're looking for something a little different in your RTS, give them a go. ■

DETAILS

FOR

Age of Empires

VERSION

N/A

URL

www.planetageofempire.com/downloads/campaigns/aoe1.shtml

5/5

HL: Palisade

You believe in the users?

Hopefully some of you reading this will be old enough to remember the last good Disney movie, Tron released way back 20 years ago in 1982. The film, revolutionary at the time now looks dated but took a very interesting look at the lives of computer game characters. With the imminent production of the sequel, Tron 2.0 we thought it only fitting that we brought you a Tron inspired mod to celebrate.

Palisade is simply an updated and very pretty version of the Tron Light Bikes - racing cycles that leave a solid trail wherever they pass, forming a deadly barrier for the unwary to crash into. The objective of the game is simplicity itself. Riders face off against each other on an isometric grid map. Cycles can only turn on the grid at ninety degree angles, leaving a coloured wall wherever they travel. These walls are solid and will destroy any vehicle that crashes into them, including the players. Supporting both team and last man standing style gameplay, Palisades has a very arcade like feel, worrying far more about outstanding gameplay than flashy graphics or effects.

This is not to say that HL: Palisade looks poor. Far from it - the game is quite stunning with sleek colourful bikes, great perspective

and a good sense of speed, something often lacking in mods which feature vehicles.

Conceptually the design of the mod is excellent - it's small (only 1.8Mb) so anyone can download it and different enough from all of the other mods out there that it won't be lost in the jumble. Controls are easy to map and master with only forward, back, left, right and mouselook to worry about. No shooting, no jumping, just driving. You'll get the hang of hooning around at speeds so great they throttle the imagination whilst looking out for the enemy in no time. Then it's on for young and old.

HL: Palisade ranks up there as the oddest TC mod we've found yet (with the exception of the incredibly strange Yoda mod), taking a great shooter engine and tweaking it to run a modern take on the old game Centipede. It makes for a really nice change of pace from the standard FPS "realistic warfare" mods. Shooting people is fun (in games, just in games) but every now and then you want something different. HL: Palisade will stay on the HDD for a good long while. It's great old style arcade fun. ■

DETAILS

FOR

Half-Life

VERSION

Beta 1

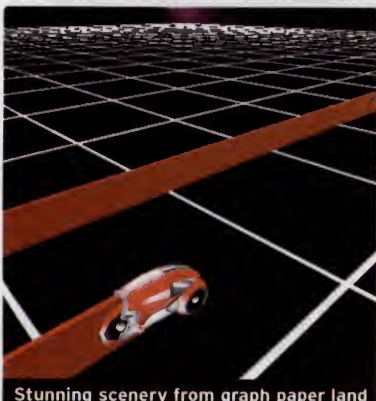
URL

http://palisade.dese.rtrcrisis.com/

5/5



The square you live in



Stunning scenery from graph paper land

Benny's Dead

A dead man and a real pain in the neck

DETAILS

FOR

Thief 2

VERSION

1.2

URL

www.fileplanet.com/index.asp?file=53283

5/5



Ready or not - here I come!



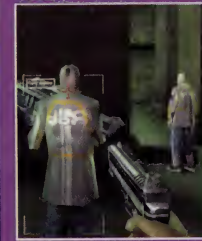
The annual Moth statue competition

The prologue to Benny's Dead is really quite sublime, proving to be both very well thought out and very engaging. After the disastrous events at the end of Thief II, Garrett has chosen to leave the big bad city, finding solace in a small hamlet called Moth. He's not there long before his skills are called upon to solve a baffling mystery. It seems that a captain of the guard, the titular Benny has been found dead with two arrows in his neck whilst in the service of a much sought after noblewoman. Garrett is also told that a certain Lieutenant Janelle Torrior made a cursory investigation into the case, concluding that poor Benny had accidentally shot himself twice in the neck whilst cleaning his bow. Clearly something is amiss and it's up to Garrett to find out what.

Moth has a great small town feel, some areas bustling with activity whilst others remain oddly quiet with no background noise at all. Though the mission is not all that long it is very appealing and addictive - you'll want to keep playing until it's finished. Gameplay is pleasantly straight forward with no overt puzzles to solve apart from the central mystery. People who like puzzles may be a little disappointed but those looking for a bit of a change of pace with a truly excellent story, great conversations and a magnificently detailed town should give Benny's Dead a download. Garrett himself would be proud. ■

IN DEVELOPMENT

REDSUN 2020



A TC mod for Deus Ex, RedSun 2020 launches the player into the world of Tokyo in the year 2031 as the Nanotech Agent Joseph.

During a training mission Joseph is kidnapped by one of the three power cadres in operation in Japan: TMG, Kamikaze or Yamaguchi. Which one is responsible is just one of the mysteries in the mod which promises to be a fantastically immersive RPG/FPS fusion. With non-linear storytelling as the major focus of the mod, RedSun 2020 will allow players to work their way through the plot in any number of ways and promises at least two different endings.

As early screenshots can attest, RedSun 2020 looks fantastic and has potential to get even better with views of neon soaked Japanese streets, ritzy restaurants and seedy nightclubs to name but a few locations. If the mod can keep up with the grim cyberpunk flavour of the premise, RedSun 2020 will make a very worth addition to any serious gamers hard-drive.

FOR: Deus Ex

VERSION: N/A

URL: www.planetdeusex.com/redsun/

Desert Crisis

Return to UNREALISTIC small unit combat

DETAILS

FOR

Kingpin

VERSION

1.0

URL

www.planetkingpin.com/power/

3/5

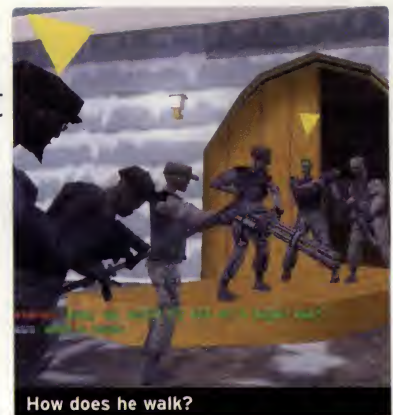
People may love them and pay more homage to them than they do the law, religion or personal hygiene, but few can argue that there's a confusing amount of realistic small unit combat mods currently floating around the net. There's Silver Forces, Urban Terror, Uncrossable Parallel, Day of Defeat, Global Wars, Firearms, War in Europe, Russian Front, Annihilation, True Combat, The Temporary Tango and Counter-Strike, to name but a few. All of the above games are great fun but sometimes you crave a bit of action and silliness rather than grim and gritty tactical violence. Desert Crisis is set to fill this void upon its release, delivering a mixture of high octane action and some high something else silliness.

Set in the near future in an Earth dominated by war and underhanded political intrigue, so not much different from our own, three opposing forces fight it out for dominance. In the red corner sits the devious acronym UPKO, the United Peace Keeping Organisation. In the blue corner sits the US who split from the UPKO for ideological reasons. Finally, in the corner that shouldn't really be in a boxing analogy sits the Scourge of the Desert, a group of terrorists or

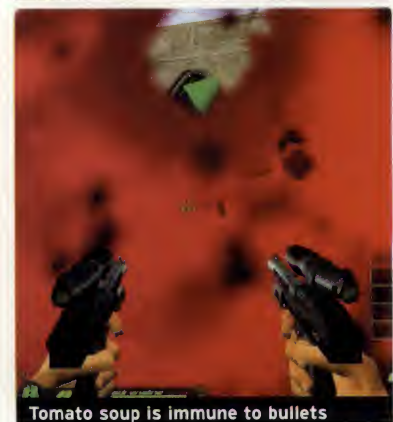
freedom fighters, depending on how you want to look at it. All of these various sides hate each other for various reasons but it all comes down to that wonderfully zany concept of fighting for peace.

Each of the three teams have their own strengths and weaknesses - the UPKO have access to higher tech, the US are more gung-ho and the Scourge of the Desert (also known as the Scorpions Sting) have access to advanced cybernetic limb replacements. Much like in an RPG the player has the ability to totally create a character to play, choosing between different body parts, weapons, skills and special abilities, colour, hair and whether they wear glasses or not. You name it you can choose it, making for literally thousands of character permutations.

With an emphasis on fun and adrenaline rather than realism, Desert Crisis features weapons ranging from the not so humble .50 Desert Eagle, a gun described by the makers as being "not suitable for users with small hands" to laser rifles and plasma cannons. Other promised goodies include special martial arts combos, drivable vehicles complete with turrets, parachuting from helicopters, bullet dodging, Soldier of Fortune style dismemberment and some of the coolest maps around. The Beta should be available very soon now, so expect to see servers popping up everywhere. ■



How does he walk?



Tomato soup is immune to bullets

are you hyperactive?

the all **NEW** and improved Hyperactive[®] is here
news previews reviews chat code downloads prizes



hyperactive[®] 3.0
GAMES ONLINE

➤ [HTTP://HYPERACTIVE.COM](http://HYPERACTIVE.COM) ➤



PLAYSTATION



MAC



PC-COROM



CHAT



SEGA



ARCADE



NINTENDO 64

Frederik Pohl's Gateway

Developer: Legend Entertainment
Release Year: 1992
Current Status: Allegedly re-released as freeware sometime in the dying years of the 20th Century, but unfortunately we can't locate it. If you find it, let us know.



It's down the cosmic toilet with YOU giant alien Goldfish...

Having recently re-read Frederik Pohl's excellent sci-fi character study 'Gateway' - which has one of the most compelling antiheroes ever in Robinette Broadhead - naturally my mind drifted back to those dear departed days when games came on two floppy disks and once installed occupied barely a fraction of our 486SX 25MHz's 125Mb hard drive.

Gateway was touted as an enhanced text adventure, in that it used a classic text parser to accept verb/object/subject commands (ie 'hit orc with sword') in order to guide the player through an adventure. The enhanced part was the graphics. Each location had a quarter-screen image with various hotspots on it, so in a picture of a garden you could click on a rose to pick it instead of typing 'pick rose'. It

added a lot to the experience of the game, and was surprisingly rich for a 1992 title.

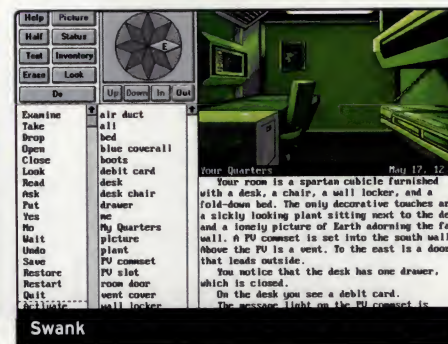
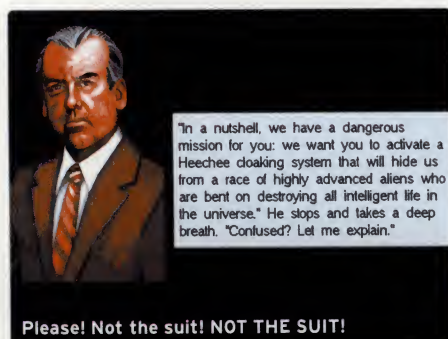
The story was based on the central premise of the book that inspired the game: humans have discovered the remains of a lost alien civilisation called the Heechee. The Heechee built an enormous space station out of an asteroid which the humans call Gateway. Inside Gateway are hundreds of ships. Each ship can be programmed with a destination and it will take any passengers there via a sort of warp drive called Tau Space. Unfortunately, all the destinations or course settings are in Heechee, which no one can read. This means once you hop in a Heechee ship and squeeze the 'go' teat (yes, teat) you don't know where you're going or even if the trip will be shorter than the supply of life support and food you take with you.

The book waxed quite morbid about this aspect with lots of grisly descriptions of dead prospectors but the game was less explicit. Still, the business of prospecting is dangerous and a fifty light year journey will often result in disappointment. But when a prospecting journey pays off, boy does it pay off.

How are your prospects?

So the player takes the role of a young prospector who wins a ten-day spot on Gateway (even life support 'per diems' cost a packet) and must first qualify for flight crew, then take out a prospecting ship and attempt to make some money.

Many text adventures dumped a huge quest and a thousand interlocking locations on the player right at the beginning of the game, but Gateway's real strength





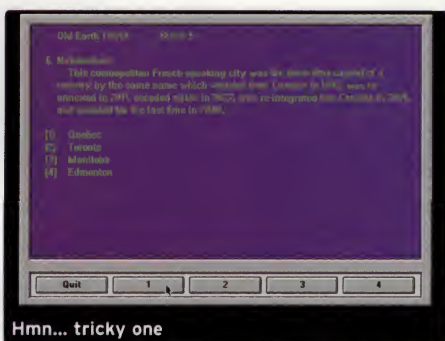
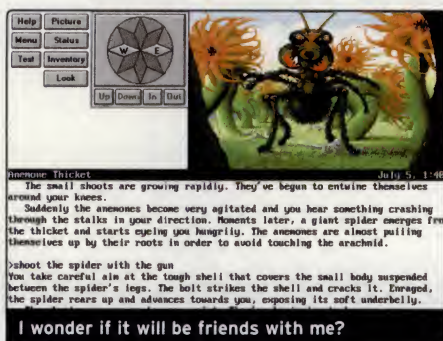
was the way in which the locations were contained. Gateway the station operated as a hub, with living quarters, a club, a casino, a garden and a few other rooms, and finally the flight deck. Once the player had solved the puzzles necessary to get flight crew status, each planet they travelled to had its own distinct set of locations and self-contained puzzles. This also meant the sense of progression and achievement was very pronounced, although naturally as a text adventure the game was perfectly linear.

The game was quite long, with at least 30 hours of play for puzzle-gifted folks who see every solution plain as day the moment a problem pops up. Another great aspect of the game was that, like the book, the adventure started on a very personal and intimate level and eventually blew out into a massive epic universe-

saving extravaganza involving alien computers, intergalactic watchtowers, a hairy beast, a grizzled old prospector (who came complete with a whitewater raft adventure), computer viruses as old as time itself and a man who could walk through walls.

Gateway was certainly a far cry from "you are standing near a white house" and an excellent use of limited technology in a time when many games were, to put it plain, bloody ugly. There was even a sequel called, of all things, Homeworld but by then Gateway's time had passed and the game has long since faded into memory. Great days though.

Anthony Fordham



GREAT GATEWAY MOMENTS

For a basic text adventure with only a few barely animated graphics, Gateway nevertheless manage to create some classic gaming moments. Most memorable was the early Virtual Reality puzzle, the solving of which would eventually allow you to finish the game.

While exploring Gateway you come across the VR room, where a fat technician offers to give you a pass into an exclusive club if you can figure out how to exploit the VR's bugs and crash the program. As an example, he tells the story of how he crashed a jogging VR by leaving the road to go and buy a donut.

Once in the VR you find yourself on a beach near a bar where you can get an endless supply of free daiquiris. It's all very pleasant but your bathing suit keeps changing colour so there's something clearly wrong with the program. One of the ways to crash a VR is to get it stuck in an infinite loop of some kind so it eventually overloads. A little observation reveals that the barman creates daiquiris out of thin air by putting a glass in a scanner. However, he won't let you use the scanner, so the solution is to give him all your daiquiris until he gets drunk and passes out, then it's a simple matter of overloading the VR and crashing it, thus impressing the fat technician and winning you the pass.

Later in the game you find yourself trapped by a malicious alien computer in a three-tiered VR of Virtual Heaven, Virtual Hell and eventually Virtual Earth. Virtual Heaven finds you in a massive casino full of beautiful women where every bet wins you the big jackpot. To crash this VR you simply need to play to lose; bet twice on the spin-a-wheel or fold in poker. Following this you find yourself in Virtual Hell where you must get a hydra to attack itself and thus keep growing new heads until the system overloads. And Virtual Earth? Well, that would be telling. And who knows, you might just want to play the freeware release now...

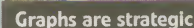
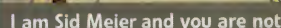
Given that he spends something in the order of 45 hours a week playing this game, we thought James Cottee would be the best person to appreciate all its weaker points. So we asked him.

What went wrong? Uncle Sid and his specially bred team of Civ junkies worked for years on Civ 3, creating lush graphics, rich sounds, and most important of all, balanced rules. They took in suggestions from Civ fans all over the world, and tweaked every last rule to within an inch of its life. Having gone over the two previous iterations with a fine-toothed comb, one would think that this would produce nothing less than a marvel of modern entertainment. And marvel we did.

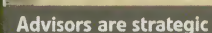
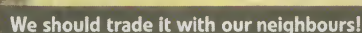
But now that the full scope of Civ 3 gameplay has sunk in, its flaws are obvious, and the gamer still left wanting. We've come a long way, though, and to see this we need look back to the EGA-looking graphics of the original.

The variety of units was fairly sparse, and sometimes combat would seem to proceed illogically. Every Civ 1 player has an anecdote about a battleship losing to a Phalanx. The number of government types was limited, and the victory conditions even more so. Workers needed a lot of guidance to cover the land in irrigation and railroads, and there was no reliable way to automate the lesser details of your empire. This became particularly tiresome in the endgame, where ruling the world meant doing all its paperwork. Civ 1 was better than good, it was brilliant. But it cried out for a sequel.

Civ 2 addressed many of these concerns, with mixed results. There were certainly many new types of units, allowing for varied styles of attack. The new government type of fundamentalism allowed one to send screaming hordes of fanatics at your foes, and its unfair advantages were balanced by its uselessness until the endgame, which was as taxing as ever. Yes, the endgame. Now doubly complex, as not only could you not automate anything for quids, but there seemed to be twice as many buildings required to perform the same job. Advanced cities would be crippled by the need to build vital upgrades, and gameplay inevitably devolved into an endless parade of windows informing you of their completion.



Under Despotism, rushing units and improvements costs population, not gold. With your cities capped at 6 population, it makes a lot of sense in the early game to throw the odd peasant into the furnace. Fill your border cities with temples and libraries, and watch those heathen foreigners covert! As a rule of thumb, pop-rushing is economical either if your city is on the verge of growing, or it has a food surplus of 3 or more. A city with wheat in its radius thus is in an ideal position to export workers to the rest of your empire. If the first improvement you rush is a granary, or you have The Pyramids, all the better.



SCORE	
World Ranking.	
Australia	149
Germany	59
France	11
Greece	47
Ukraine	24
Your Score	
48	
Summary	
Happy Citizens	1.8
Content and Satisfaction	1.7
Tolerance	1.9
Future Ticks	0.0

Click to link to the discussion without
when time runs out.
Your overall score is the
average of your scores

CULTURAL ADVISOR

Use Total Culture Value 1700

Current Date 1510 AD

Salamanca

Use City & Influence to Change Date 11

City	Culture	Influence	Culture Rating	Engagement
Salamanca	50	2	3	4
Tlaxcootlan	0	1	0	4
Cahitlan	275	3	0	4
Mexico	220	3	4	4
Mesoamerica	302	3	4	4
Hispania (400)	0	1	4	0
Tlaxcootlan	0	1	0	4
Breda (200)	200	3	4	4

Numbers are strategic

[illegible]

MILITARY ADVISOR

Total Loss
45
Advanced Units
80
BC

Available Leather
Advanced Units
80
BC

The Army of the Australian Dispositon

The Army of the German: Monarchy

Infantry
Cavalry
Artillery
Engineers
Medicals
Horses

Load Game **Save Game**

Little blokes to fight with

HINT:
TIMING IS EVERYTHING.

This was evident in Civ 1 and 2, but with Civ 3 it's crucial. Sustained conflict (or peace) can be devastating to your interests, so always keep an eye on where you may be overstretching yourself. Quantifiable goals are a good way to stay your hand. One can resolve to halt an advance when, say, a certain strategic resource is captured, or the enemy has been beaten down to a handful of cities. The last few cities are always the hardest to take, and besides, when a civ is up against the wall, they can be squeezed for everything they have, indefinitely.

A screenshot of a mobile application interface. At the top, there's a header area with a small portrait of a person and the text "Solid State Library". Below this is a large white rectangular box. Underneath the box, the word "Producing" is visible. The main part of the screen displays a vertical list of book covers. Each cover has a small icon at the top and a title below it. The titles are: "The Great Gatsby", "The Catcher in the Rye", "The Sound and the Fury", "The Waste Land", "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", "The Waste Land", "The Waste Land", "The Waste Land", "The Waste Land", "The Waste Land". The bottom of the screen shows a navigation bar with icons for home, search, and other functions.

Granted, Civ 2 had a great deal going for it, not least the ease with which it could be modded for custom rules or campaigns. But the initial thrill of expansion always bogged down into the details of country running. Civ veterans would try their hand at Alpha Centauri, or Call to Power, never feeling truly satisfied. They yearned for the day when a virtual messiah would come, but had the patience to let Sid do his thing until the promised time. After another five years, Civ 3 has met universally positive reviews, but familiarity seems to breed contempt.

Contempt?

In the early and middle stage of play, the new game element of culture does an excellent job of magnifying positive feedback to the player. The very idea of swamping another civilisation in your own junk culture is quite appealing, and treats your civ not so much as a collection of cities, but an ameba-like blob. While the biggest gains can be made through spurts of conquest, it's nice to know your empire "earns interest" just by existing. This factor is especially important considering that the principles of combat have been changed completely.

No longer do the zones of control from Civ 1 and 2 apply; now a unit can go anywhere it likes in enemy territory until it's captured or destroyed. This means the only way to keep units out is to populate your border with a Maginot Line of defences; a costly and inadequate solution. Conclusive victories only come with the capture of cities and denying the enemy his production, and cities only fall once leveled with artillery and raided by mobile units. War is hell, but being a mindless blob is easy.

To combine these two philosophies, one can embark on a "culture rush," concentrating flashy city improvements in far-flung territories. All of these factors and more combine to make empire building in Civ 3 to be an entirely satisfying experience, but once you've got an empire, you find you start to run out of options.

For starters, corruption can be crippling. As in 1 and 2, Civ 3 calculates a city's corruption based on how far away it is from your capital. But in a new twist, the number of cities you have is also a factor. On a standard sized map, an empire with 9 or more cities will start to feel extra corruption effects, even close to the capital city. The Forbidden Palace thus becomes an essential upgrade for expansionists, but even then one only gets 16 cities free from this effect. Many players resent being forced to follow the game designers' views on how many cities they should be allowed to build, and this corruption has proven one of the bigger headaches for Civ veterans.

Vis for Vexation

The new victory conditions are also a mixed blessing. Winning through conquest (controlling 2/3 of the map) and culture (earning 100,000 culture points) are intriguing challenges at first, but finishing the game through these means proves wholly unsatisfactory. Unlike conquering that last city, or clicking the "Launch" button on your spaceship, their victory conditions are derived by formula. When the little box pops up telling you you've won, you feel cheated. Fortunately these options, and the uninspiring path of diplomatic victory, can be turned off.

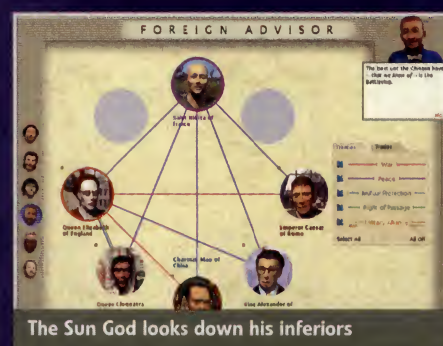
Most of the little details in Civ 3 are polished, but even at this superficial level there are a few things that grate. The advice of your advisors, for instance, often ignores game elements that are obvious to the human player. Say you have six sources of spice under your control, and you are trading all five of your surplus supply to your neighbours (for a hefty profit). Your trade advisor will point out that you only have one source of spice, and that you should get more and trade it with your friends. The advisors are little more than window dressing, and a fail-safe in case you accidentally declare war on someone. Then there's the music in the modern era - one has to consciously resist the urge to play the air guitar (not).

While there are many quirks with the way Civ 3 works, all of these boil down to rule changes, and thus a big obstacle to enjoyment is the player themselves. Not only does one have to learn a whole new set of costs and risks and details, but overall strategies must also be considered. That is, you have to have one. Blind expansionism has been replaced with a rich canvas of



HINT: WATCH YOUR BACK.

The computer always, always knows where your weakest point is. Civ III uses this for two purposes: deciding where barbarians are going to attack, and deciding where rival civs are going to try and get a foothold in your territory. The CPU likes nothing better than to send a galley with a settler and a warrior deep into your domain and cut your empire in two. Even if there is a single square on your landmass outside your borders, a rival civ will spot it and lay claim to it by divine right. Just like in Cyprus, or some other palce. Always keep your mobile forces evenly distributed around your map, and nip these annoyances in the bud.





Many people do live here

HINT: DON'T AUTOMATE YOUR WORKERS.

Sure, it's tempting. The button's right there. But the AI, in addition to being unable to read your mind to divine your priorities, also makes natural mistakes all its own. Like needlessly moving workers around, wasting turns when they could be building roads. Or moving worker teams in giant stacked clumps, attending to tasks already underway, and inviting attack. Workers are good for a lot of things, like rushing improvements, and skewing demographics. But not for they can't think for themselves. Automated workers are like council workers: good for nothing.

gameplay styles, enhanced further by the strengths of the various civs. Plus, the rules are now so balanced that if you don't have a clear strategy you want to try out, you may as well not play at all.

Quirky and Kinky

But even when the quirks of Civ 3 are mastered, the biggest, inescapable problem is the endgame. When the surviving civs straddle the globe, and the successful player has his fingers in every continent, the drag between turns becomes excruciating. Both during your turn, when all of your units must be individually managed, and between turns, when the AI moves its units around like swarming ants. While city governors can be given fairly specific orders, there's still no such thing as an automated general whom you can sic on your enemies. The 20th century can be the most tedious part of the game, and can be a good time to indulge in a world war or two, if only to relieve the boredom.

A multiplayer version could hit us as soon as March, but Firaxis have been understandably cagey about releasing information on this upgrade, let alone the upgrade itself. Turn based games of Civ's complexity do not lend themselves easily to multiplayer action, and the move seems to be more due to blind commercial logic more than anything. We can only hope that Mr. Meier will hold enough sway to prevent the mindless spin-offs that have spawned from other franchises. Civ Ant, anyone? Civ Copter? The Civs: Hot Date?

Civ 3 is still a great game. Once you warm to its nuances, it is very agreeable, and for the keen mind with spare time it offers hundred of hours of quality gameplay. Its only flaw is that it isn't quite perfect. It sounds childish, but that's the way it is. Many dived in expecting to meet God, and found it was just another strategy game. A very good one, and the best Civ game yet, but still, just a game.



HINT: BARGAIN AGGRESSIVELY.

Whenever at the bargaining table with a foreign power, always test the limits of exactly how much you can squeeze out of them. It may be more than you think. Roads and harbours can lead to prosperous trade routes, so get yourself connected. Don't be afraid to trade your technology, either. If you don't sell it, someone else will.



I wonder if you built these too?

cd powerplay^{#71}



Good things come in slim packages and CDs are the slimmest packages of all. Fire up your Beast (or Beastie) and check out the latest that the wonderful world of PCs has to offer. From the laid back world of Trainz and the WW2 shoot em up Medal of Honour to Serious Sam 2 and the furious Mechwarrior4, we've got demos covered. Don't forget to check the latest mods and patches in Gameplay to keep your games running smooth.

cdtech@pcpowerplay.com.au

Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it (no postage required),

together with a description of the error, to:

PC PowerPlay CD Returns

Reply Paid 634, 7 Renwick St

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SPOTLIGHT01

Return To Castle Wolfenstein Demo

Step into the combat boots of special agent B.J. Blazkowicz and play through some of the coolest missions from the full Return to Castle Wolfenstein game. Battle Nazi soldiers as you try to escape from Castle Wolfenstein and take on undead guardians of arcane knowledge as you try to undo the SS Paranormal division's secret plots. It's lots of fun and worthy of this month's spotlight.

DEMOS CD ONE



Mechwarrior 4: Black Knight Multiplayer Demo

This multiplayer demo contains 3 types of games: Deathmatch, team deathmatch, and "Siege Assault". The latter pits teams of players against each other to accomplish map-specific objectives.



NASCAR Racing 2002 Season

This is a complete demo for NASCAR Racing 2002 Season. The full game will feature every track that will be raced in the 2002 NASCAR Winston Cup Series.



Monopoly Tycoon Demo

This demo of Monopoly Tycoon provides you with one scenario and introduces you to the main features and concepts of the full game.



Medal of Honor: Allied Assault Multiplayer Demo

Here is a look at the FPS action game, Medal of Honor: Allied Assault, in a single Deathmatch map only demo. This Quake3 powered, WWII themed, title should satisfy a bit of the tension while awaiting release.



Trainz Demo

Design then build your own virtual railroad, displaying your creativity in the environment on the trains path, then ride the rails of your creation!

GAMEPLAY 01



Monopoly Tycoon v1.2 Patch

This patch fixes several game issues and adds game functionality. It also improves the AI for more of a challenge.



Tropico v1.06 Patch

This update corrects many small bugs for the Tropico game and brings your version up to version 1.06.



Soul Reaver 2 Patch v1.02

This version 1.02 patch for the sequel to the hit adventure game, Soul Reaver, gives you a few good fixes to clean up your gameplay.



Red Faction v1.20 Patch

This is a small update for Red Faction that removes a bug in the file loading code. This bug has allowed people to run mod-like cheats without going through the usual mod detection.



Arcanum Mod Pack

Here are 6 new Arcanum modules custom made by the Troika team!

SPOTLIGHT02

Etherlords Demo

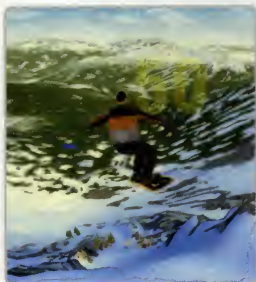
This new Etherlords demo includes both duel and strategy game modes. Now you can enjoy all features of the global strategy campaign of Etherlords before buying the game. While playing for the belligerent Chaots or the tenacious Vitals, you will capture resources and spell shops, mighty artefacts and precious ether sources to gain control over your heroes' spell books and destroy enemy castles.



Serious Sam: The Second Encounter Demo

This demo is designed to give everybody a glimpse of what's to come in The Second Encounter addition to the fast and fun FPS action title, Serious Sam.

This multiplayer demo contains 3 types of games: Deathmatch, team deathmatch, and "Siege Assault". The latter pits teams of players against each other to accomplish map-specific objectives.



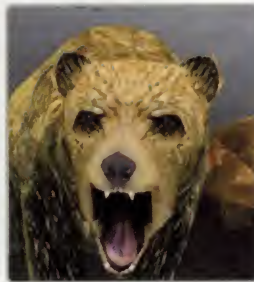
Virtual Jay Peak Demo

Check out this cool snowboarding demo that lets you speed down slopes in Canada, riding the trails and doing tricks all the way.



Mall Tycoon Demo

This is a great demo that lets you construct the shopping mall of your dreams. Included is tons of commodities, seasoned events, a cool 3D environment, and all the feel of walking around the mall.



Hunting Unlimited

Action and fun, in a HUNTING game? Yep, no more wandering through the woods with nothing to shoot. Hunting Unlimited puts you right in the action, and you gotta be quick to survive.



Quake 3 The Dark Conjunction mod

The Dark Conjunction is a true single player total conversion. The game's ambient will be a fusion between fantasy and apocalyptic reality in which the in depth storyline unfolds as you progress through the game.



Age of Empires 2 Scenarios

A collection of many campaigns ranging from Roman Empire to Punic Wars, through to conquest of America and Mexico and many more.



Half-Life Palisade mod

This is a cool mod for HL where you battle on bikes just like Trons' Light Bike battle. Leave a wall behind you as you speed away making 90 degree turns and trying to catch your opponent off guard so he runs into a wall.



Thief 2 Benny's Dead mod

This has a great and in depth plot that will keep you glued to your monitor. Great mission that's visually pleasing and bug free. Here are 6 new Arcanum modules custom made by the Troika team!



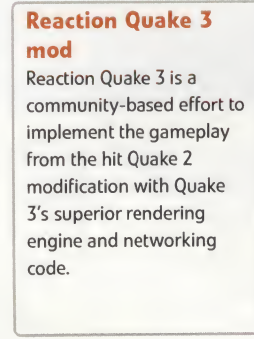
Half Life Heroes mod

Half-Life Heroes is a multiplayer mod. It features super-heroes fighting against super-villains. Choose a side and see how many times you save or destroy the world.



Max Payne Kung Fu Edition mod

This is a hilarious modification for the hit action title, Max Payne. This literally gives Max the ability to kick some major butt using hardcore Kung Fu skills



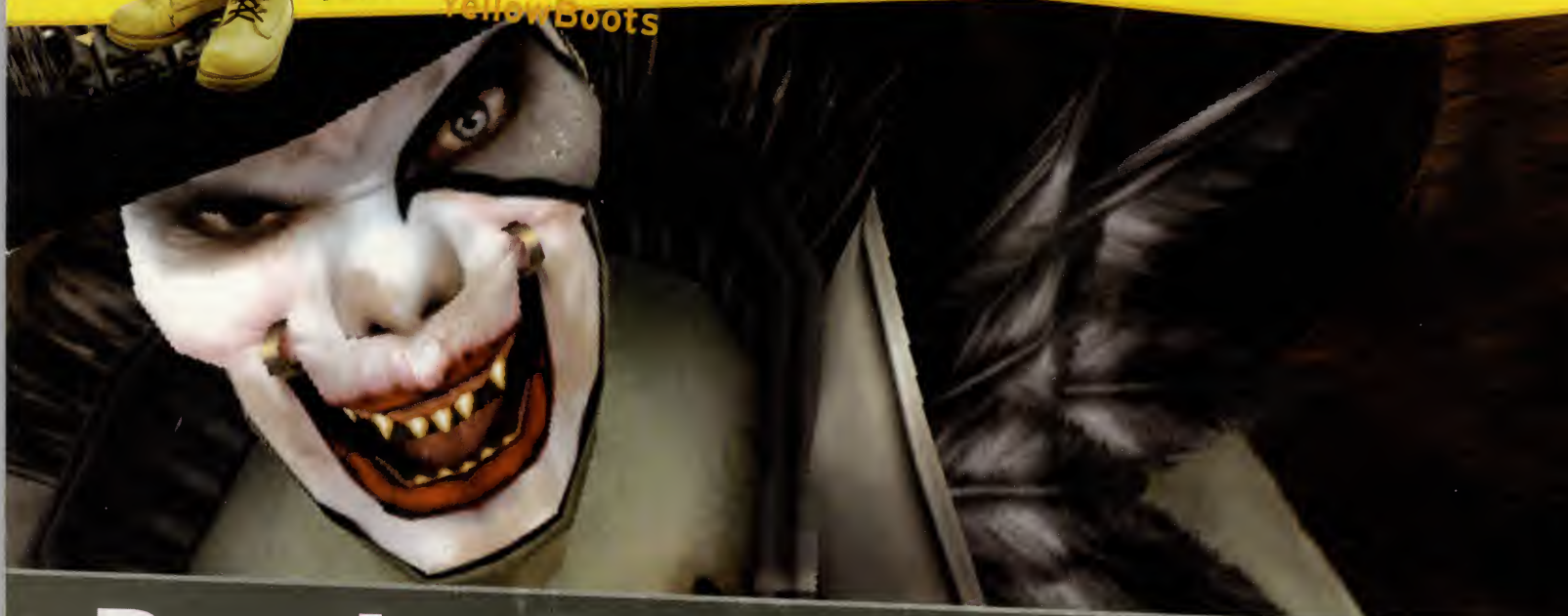
Reaction Quake 3 mod

Reaction Quake 3 is a community-based effort to implement the gameplay from the hit Quake 2 modification with Quake 3's superior rendering engine and networking code.





YellowBoots
YellowBoots



Psycho Fanboy 2002

Based, inevitably, on a true story

Fame has its price. It's not all free games and cable Internet you know. It's not all business lunches and Spin drinks, it's not all free XBOXs and playing PaRappa the Rapper 2 on the office PS2 until 2300h on a Tuesday night, it's not all expensive cocktails and dusky maidens. Fame, occasionally, is hell.

For instance, the Boots and I act as moderators on the PCPP website, and one day as we were trawling through the dross for occasional nuggets of gold (to mix metaphors) we came across a bunch of particularly violent and offensive posts regarding our dear Editor. I mean, yeah I guess in a sense he IS a Johnny-come-lately in that he's still pretty new, but some of this stuff was just uncalled for. And unkind. So, justly, the Boots and I deleted the poster - let's call him Mick - from the forums. Didn't ban, just deleted.

A couple of months later the Boots and I received an email from Mick, in which Mick said "I apologise for my behaviour on the forums, I let my personal anger at you get the better of me. You see, I met you many years ago at Carousel in Port Macquarie, and you told me to

"f--- off". I will not ask for an apology because unless it was freely given it would be meaningless. But you hurt a stranger with those words, and those words continue to hurt to this day."

Now. See. The problem with this is that yeah, the story is kind of plausible because in our time the Boots and I have told many people to f--- off, but unfortunately for Mick's deranged brain, one thing the Boots and I have never done is go to Port Macquarie. So naturally, we jotted off an email back to Mick in which we asked exactly what he was going on about and had he got us confused with maybe someone else?

Came the reply, "It was in the gaming arcade Carousel near the Ritz Cinemas, which is no longer there. You were playing the jockey game and I asked you the time and you told me to f--- off. My friend said don't you know who that was? That was the Yellow Boots guy who is really intelligent and bought a computer in high school."

Naturally I replied to this along the lines of what kind of fantasy world are you living in, no one accuses me of yada yada, never been to Port, Yellow Boots is only just turning one year old so how could I be the Yellow Boots guy, et cetera. Being

somewhat ired, I finished the email with the rather inflammatory "I do not suffer fools gladly and you sir are a prize fool."

Next thing I know, the secretary is buzzing me to say she has a Mick G on the phone, and then this character's undereducated drawl is in my ear insisting in a highly superior and irritating way that he's not fibbing to me, he really did meet me in Port Macquarie, I really was playing a jockey game and...

"Just shut up for a minute," I snapped, "I'm normally a pretty relaxed guy, but I'm sick and tired of your bulldust." The other folks in the office pricked up their ears, expecting to hear another classic Bootsian tonguelashing. "I've never met you mate," I spat, and then I said what people later told me was a very confusing and unnerving thing to hear a supposedly sane person say, "And I've never played a f---ing jockey game in my life."

And that, once I'd slammed down the receiver, was that.



TIMMY
THE
CIRCLE



ONE NIGHT, ON
A MODERATED
IRC CHAT...

Sut3kh: Arg! RTS AI
is no match 4 my
leet skillz! I dema
a REAL challenge!

HMMM...

timmy/pcpp: Its' easy
mab- to dael with
brainles luzorz, yuo
just get smashed!!

LOL!

Sut3kh: Hang on- are
u drunk right now?

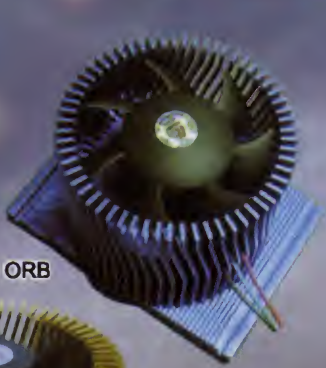
BINGO

PCPP#72 on sale 13th March 2002 will contain such wonderful bounty as a massive Warcraft 3 preview, a round up of LCD screens, a whole bunch of really interesting news stories and more tasty game reviews than you can shake a stick at. So start saving up your \$9.95 now!

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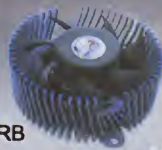
MINI SUPER ORB



LOW PROFILE ORB



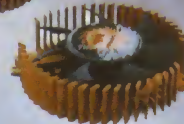
BLUE ORB



STORM Yoyo FAN



ORANGE ORB



CRYSTAL ORB



MEMORY COOLER



VOCANO 2



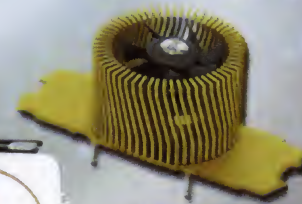
GOLDEN ORBSOCKET 370



COPPER SHIM



GOLDEN ORB SLOT1



VOCANO 7



MINI COPPER ORB



GOLDEN ORB SLOT A



VOCANO 6



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